



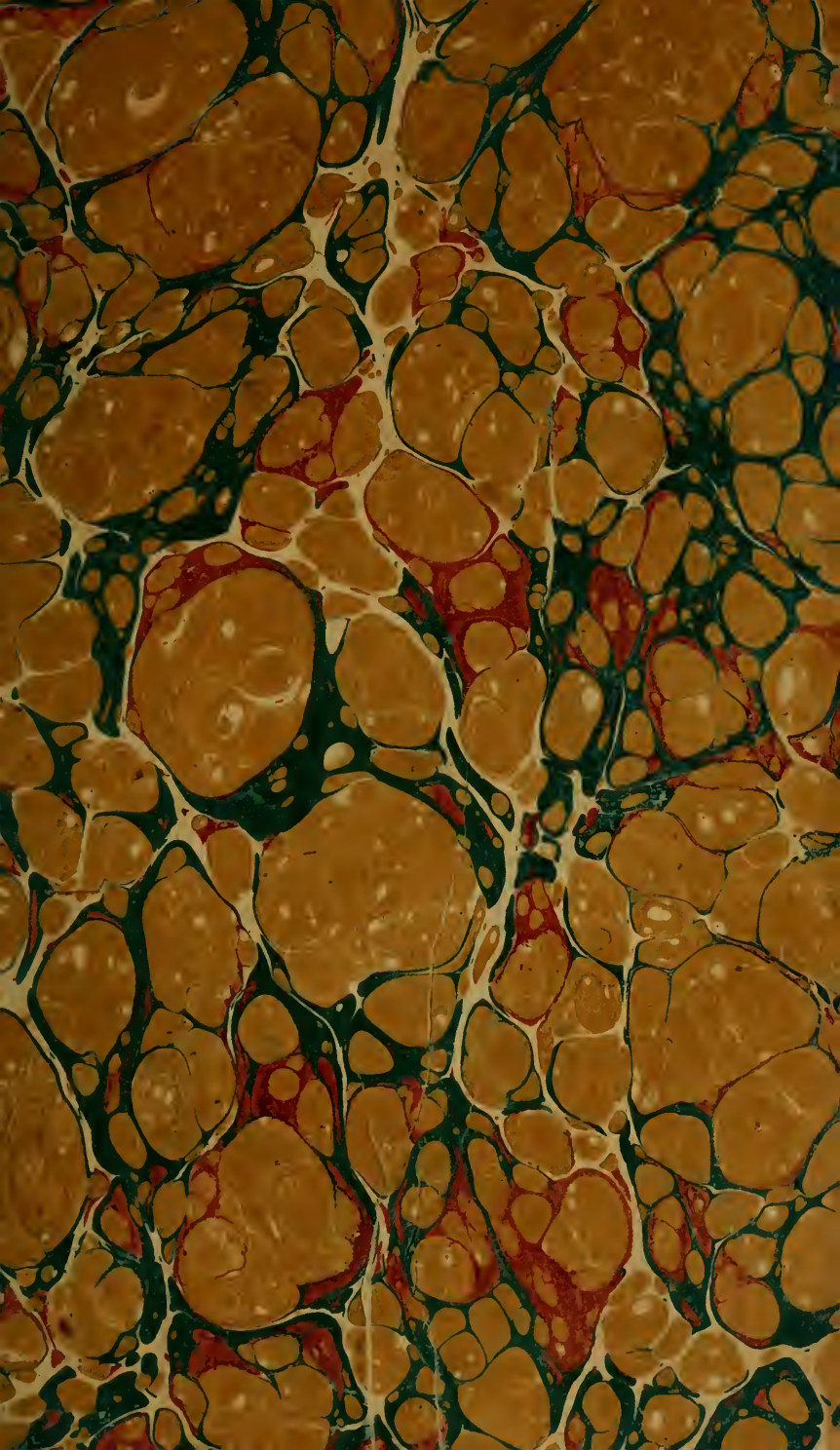
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The Christian oratory, or,
The devotion of the closet

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Charles S. Bancker



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CHRISTIAN GALLERY

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THE
CHRISTIAN ORATORY:
OR
THE DEVOTION
OF
THE CLOSET DISPLAYED.

BY
THE REV. BENJAMIN BENNET.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
AN APPENDIX.

THE SIXTH EDITION.
IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME FIRST.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued in the Oratory of God.—LUKE VI. 12.

LONDON:

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1811.

P R E F A C E.

HAVING so far exceeded all due bounds in this work, I shall not add to the fault by a large preface. The head of Meditation, particularly, is drawn out so long, as will scarce admit of an apology ; and it is probable, this is not the only thing the critic will censure in it: However, the various subjects treated of may be entertaining to some ; and what is said upon them, may pass, at least, as practical discourses, I hope not wholly without instruction, if not as specimens proper to my purpose. And if the reader think fit to pass

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over the several specimens in perusing the book (only turning to them as he has occasion, and for his assistance, if he attempt any thing in the same way) he will have the discourse in a closer connection, and the whole design in a clearer view.

I reckon it to little purpose to acquaint the reader with the occasion and motives of this undertaking, to profess my own good designs, bespeak his candour and acceptance. It would argue stupidity not to be concerned about success ; but I know not that this would be a means of securing it ; that affair ought to be left in an higher hand. Indeed men's tastes are so different, and as much in matters of devotion as any thing else, that I cannot expect what is here offered will please every body. If it be acceptable and useful to a few ; engage them in more solemn devotion in their Oratories, than they have hitherto attended ; promote their acquaintance with God and themselves, and fitness for heaven ; I shall not think my labour lost.

PREFACE.

I am sensible we have plenty of books of devotion, and many of them truly valuable; and I am far from thinking that he who adds to the number, must, so much as pretend, to excel all that have gone before him; I am sure I make no such pretence. But different genius's, capacities, and turns of mind ought to be accommodated. The great variety there is in the works both of nature and art, is an argment of the wisdom and goodness of Providence, thereby supplying the inclinations and occasions of all sorts. Some may think the method of devotion here prescribed impertinent or impracticable, calculated for a kind of *Utopian* religion; to others it may be more acceptable and profitable; and in a matter of such high importance as religion and devotion, any little improvement is well worth endeavouring.

What I have chiefly proposed to myself, is to enlarge the method of devotion; to carry it through more particulars than is usual; and accordingly I have chiefly insisted upon those

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branches of devotion that are less known, and are generally omitted in books of devotion ; as the manner of Reading Scriptures, as a part of worship ; Meditation, stated and occasional ; Psalmody, &c. aiming to furnish the Christian with a more complete plan and scheme of closet religion. And whatever defects some may find, and others make in the performance, I am satisfied I cannot be said *actum agere*, to do what has been often done before, and build on other foundations.

As I have touched a great number of subjects, and spoke with freedom on some of them, no doubt several things will occur, not suited to every one's gust, and that may offend men of narrow rigid principles, *the slaves of their respective hypotheses* : but methinks it would be a reasonable request to such persons, would they hear any but themselves, and look upon any face with temper that wants their complexion, that they would not cast away the good with the bad, and for the sake of a few obnoxious passages, that happen not to

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agree with their sentiments, to condemn the whole treatise, and refuse the assistance it might afford them, in things they themselves allow.

Besides, the exceptions that may be taken to particular incidental passages by the opinionative, I expect the whole will be distasteful to some ; such I mean, who, notwithstanding they keep a sort of a distant station in the Christian church, yet are so far from the true spirit of Christianity, that they are at enmity with its principles, rules, and practice, looking upon every thing that is serious as a sort of enthusiasm and cant. But these are not the persons to whom I am addressing ; nor can I invite them hither, having no entertainment for them. They have too fine a taste even to relish the Bible, and too much wit, as they think, to learn of infinite wisdom ; and it is easy to foresee what censure they will pass, *out of their chair*, upon such books as these.

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The nature of this work manifestly points out the persons for whose service it is intended, viz. *Christians*; and these not in name only, that take up with a form of Godliness, denying the power; nor Christians of the lowest form, of a *Laodicean* spirit, that have neither scarce zeal enough to carry them into their Oratories; and with them the things that remain are ready to die: But *true* Christians, and Christians of some attainments and warmth in religion, that are under the influence and authority of it; that believe and live for eternity, and think nothing of importance that terminates in the present world; that are labouring, whether present or absent, to be accepted of God; whom no state of things much moves, so they may finish their course with joy; that are so far from making a jest of communion and intercourse with God, that they attend the thing as their chief solace and highest enjoyment, triumphing therein more than in all riches, and the peculiar treasure of kings and

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provinces. *These* are the persons to whose service the following essay is devoted, and with whom chiefly I expect any good reception ; and with them I leave it, waiting for the blessing of heaven, to which I recommend it and them.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Subject of the Discourse proposed and explained. Of the Jewish Proseuchæ, or Prayer-Houses; whether distinct from Synagogues. How Christ was employed in the Prayer-House, where he continued all Night (viz.) in Prayer, Meditation, &c. What Occasion he had for such Exercises.

IT will be granted by all sensible experienced Christians, that there is nothing tends more to preserve religion in its life and vigour, than a steady and regular discharge of the duties of the closet. *Apostacy*, says a pious and excellent Divine, begins at the *closet-door*; for which reason I have determined to consider the subject of closet-religion, distinctly and at large; that I may afford you the best assistance I can in so important an affair. I shall ground my discourse on that text, *Luke vi. 12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

In the beginning of this chapter, you find our blessed Lord vindicating first his disciples, and then himself, against the cavils of the *Pharisees*; who it seems accused both him and them, as profaners of the sabbath: *Why do ye, say they, that which is not lawful on the sabbath-day?* ver. 2. and again, ver. 7. *The Pharisees watched him whether he would heal on the sabbath-day.*

They thought *Christ* and his *Apostles* not strict enough in their regard to the external rest of the sabbath, taking a greater liberty than *Moses's* law, or at least, than their own laws and canons allowed. Christ first answers and silences his accusers, and then proceeds in the work of his office. It the 13th verse he chooseth and sendeth forth his twelve *Apostles*, and the text tells you with what solemnity he addressed himself to that work, introducing it by a night's extraordinary devotion ; *He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* Where observe,

1st. The place he retired to ; a *mountain*, and more particularly an *oratory*, or house of prayer. He continued all night ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τῷ Θεῷ. We render it *in prayer to God* ; but if we take the word προσευχῇ for prayer, it will be literally thus ; He continued all night *in prayer of God* ; which, as it is not sense in *English*, so the * critics will scarce allow, I presume, that the *Greek* admits of the other translation, *prayer to God* : And therefore some have thought that the *Proseucha* does not signify the duty, but the place of prayer, viz. an *oratory*. And that thus it signifies in our text, Dr. *Whitby* infers from the use of parallel phrases : As “ the mountain of God,” says he, “ the bread of God, the lamp of God, the altar of God, the sacrifice and table of God, &c. are all things consecrated and appointed to the service of God ; so προσευχῇ τῷ Θεῷ must in all reason be a house of prayer to God.” He adds, “ So the word is certainly used, *Acts* xvi.

* *Beza* renders it *pernoctaret illic orans Deum* ; but acknowledges he is forced to depart from the *Greek*, ut *planius loqueretur*.

“ 13. and by *Philo* in his oration against *Flaccus*,
 “ where he complains that their αἱ προσευχαὶ were
 “ pulled down, and that there was no place left,
 “ in which they might worship God, or pray for
 “ *Cæsar*.”

That the *Jews* had *Proseuchæ*, or houses of prayer, distinct from synagogues, and before there were any synagogues among them, several learned men have endeavoured to prove, particularly Mr. *Joseph Mede*, and lately Dr. *Prideaux*, &c. Of this nature they suppose the sanctuary of the Lord to be, mentioned *Josh. xxiv. 26.* and the synagogues, *Psal. lxxiv. 8.* *They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land*, i. e. all the places of religious assemblies (*Col Moadhe El.*), understanding thereby the *Proseuchæ* or prayer-houses; there being no synagogues, strictly so called, as is generally supposed, till after the *Babylonish* captivity.

Dr. *Prideaux* gives this brief account of these prayer-houses :

† The chief place, says he, where the *Israelites* *Connect.*
Part I.
p. 357. assembled for the worship of God, was the tem-

† What this author and others have said about the *Proseuchæ*, being mostly borrowed from Mr. *Mede*, I shall give the reader some of his thoughts on the subject, in his *Diatribes* on *Josh. xxiv. 26.* *And Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there (in Shechem) under the oak, which was in the sanctuary of the Lord*; where he contends, the sanctuary of the Lord is not the tabernacle, but one of these prayer-houses, which the *Israelites* (those of *Ephraim*) had erected in that very place, where God first appeared to *Abraham*, and where he built his first altar after he came into the land of *Canaan*. The *Jews* had but one altar and place of sacrifice (that which the Lord should choose to place the ark of his covenant there), yet they had other places for devotion and religious use; and that this sanctuary at *Shechem* was not a place of sacrifice but prayer, he endeavours to prove from these reasons :

ple at *Jerusalem*, and, before the temple was built, the tabernacle, in both of which there was an open court before the altar, in which the people met to offer up their prayers to God;

First, Because it is incredible that the *Israelites*, having but one tabernacle or temple for the whole nation, at which the males only were bound to appear but thrice a year, should have no other places of prayer nearer their dwellings; the tabernacle or temple being at least an hundred miles distant from some of them: (he means places of public prayer, for in secret, no question, they might pray where they pleased.)

Secondly, It could not be the tabernacle, which was then at *Shiloh*, and not at *Shechem*, and yet must have some fixed place, because the situation of the oak is designed by it.

Thirdly, It could not be the tabernacle, because it was forbid expressly in the law, *Deut.* xvi. 21. to plant a grove of any trees near to the altar of God, or to set a pillar; whereas here are both, an oak, or *quercetum*, in or by the sanctuary of God, and a pillar or sanctuary erected under it. Therefore,

Fourthly, He concludes this place must be a *Proseucha*, because of the circumstance of trees growing in it, unlawful in the tabernacle, but a characteristical note of a *Proseucha*, which seems to have been ordinarily beset with them. He observes that *Juvenal* mentions this *Proseucha* or prayer-house among the *Jews*;

Satir. 3.

Ede ubi consistas, in qua te quæro Proseucha.

and thinks he finds it twice in the New Testament; in our text, and *Acts* xvi. 13. where it is said, being come to *Philippi* in *Macedonia*, on the sabbath-day, they went out of the city to a river-side ἔβημιζετο προσευχῇ εἶαι, we render it, *where prayer was wont to be made*; but other versions, as the *Syriac* and *Arabic*, because there was an house of prayer, ἔβημιζετο, where it was famed or reported there was a *Proseucha* or prayer-house; and therefore the apostle, expecting an assembly, resorts thither to teach. The form of the *Proseucha*, and its difference from synagogues, he represents thus: The *Proseucha* was a plot of ground encompassed with a wall, or some other like mound or inclosure, and open above much like to our courts: the use properly for prayer, as the name imports. A synagogue was *ædificium tectum*, like our houses or churches, where the law and prophets were read, *Acts* xv. 21. Synagogues were in the cities, as the *Proseuchas* were without in the fields, a sort of disjointed courts to the temple, whither

but those that lived at a distance from the tabernacle, and afterwards from the temple, built courts like those at the temple and tabernacle, and there offered their prayers, which, adds he,

the people turned themselves when here they prayed. Dr. *Prideaux* thinks, they were not only *without* the city, but mostly *in high places*; that which our Saviour prayed in being on a mountain. He adds, In synagogues the prayers were offered up in public forms, in common for the whole congregation, but in the *Proseuchæ* they prayed as in the temple, every one apart for himself, and so our Saviour prayed in the *Proseucha* he went into. But after all, the proof is not so strong in favour of this notion, but it yet remains a question with some, whether there were *Proseuchas* distinct from synagogues. Dr. *Prideaux* grants, that in our Saviour's time synagogues were called *Proseuchæ*: and for that famous text, *Josh. xxiv.* which Mr. *Mede* lays so much stress upon, the learned Bishop *Patrick* will not allow his reasoning upon it; but thinks it likely that *Joshua*, who was the supreme governor of God's people, being old and infirm, caused the ark at this time to be brought to *Shechem*, being near to him: And whereas Mr. *Mede* urges the prohibition, *Deut. xvi. 21, 22.* of planting trees near God's altar: He answers, This does not make it unlawful to set up the sanctuary under a tree, that had been planted before, especially when it was done only for a short time, and not to make it the place of its constant abode. But I have gone too far, it may be, in these speculations, which will be thought foreign to the design of a practical discourse; however, what has been said may not be unacceptable to some, and by putting it into the margin, I have thrown it out of the way of those, who think themselves unconcerned with such matters. Whether the *Proseucha* in the text was a synagogue or a house of devotion distinct from it, is of little importance: it is enough for my purpose, if it signify *a place of prayer*, (and thus I have taken the liberty to understand it) which our Lord had recourse to, not from any opinion of its sanctity or holiness, but purely for its conveniency; it being, as we said, near to him, and a place of secrecy and retirement. At other times we find him praying in a (common) solitary place, *Mark i. 35.* and in a wilderness, *Luke v. 16.* Nor can it be pretended that these *Proseuchæ*, or oratories, were *holy* in the same sense as the tabernacle and temple were, being never sanctified by the *Shechinah*, or glorious manifestation of God.

in after-times we find called by the name of *Proseuchæ* or prayer-houses. He takes notice wherein they differed from synagogues, particularly in the uses they served for, in their form, as also their situation; synagogues being within cities or towns, whereas these oratories were without, and mostly in high places. Hence it is said in the text, *Our Saviour went up into a mountain to pray*, and continued in an oratory, *viz.* there erected.

2dly, The work *he retired for*: he went into a mountain *to pray*; not that it is necessary to suppose he confined himself to the duty of prayer. He was entered upon his public ministry, had sufficient experience of the malice of his enemies, a full prospect of the opposition he must still expect from the world: he was sending forth his disciples to preach his doctrine, and foresaw the difficulties they were to struggle with. Now it is probable that, when he retired, it was not merely for prayer, but for reflection, meditation, and other religious exercises. He would, no question, on these occasions, when he made such solemn pauses, look back on what was past, and forward to what was yet to come; to the remaining stages of his life, and to the awful concluding tragedy of it; thereby confirming his resolutions, and refreshing his mind with such considerations as were proper for that purpose. There was *a joy set before him*, Heb. xii. 2. the contemplation of which helped him to endure the cross, and despise the shame; and it is like, on these occasions, he would *set it before himself* with all suitable advantage.

If it be said, that this text, and other parallel scriptures speak only of his retiring to pray: I answer, that might be the *chief thing* he retired

for, and therefore only mentioned, though other work be not excluded. It is said of *Peter*, that he went up to the house-top at the third hour to pray, *Acts* x. 9. but one can scarce imagine, considering how much zeal the *Jews* had for their law, and that the Spirit of God has left it as the distinguishing character of the pious and devout amongst them, *Psal.* i. 2. *That they meditate therein day and night*, that such a person as *Peter* should employ no time in reading, meditation, and the like, at the stated seasons of his devotion. So that the whole duty performed on these occasions, seems expressed by the more considerable and constant branch of it; and in the same latitude we may understand what is here said of our Saviour, that he went into a mountain to pray, *i. e.* to pray, meditate, &c.

If any ask, what occasion had Christ for prayer, and other exercises of that kind, since *all fulness dwelt in him*, *Col.* i. 19. yea *the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, *Col.* ii. 9. since he was anointed by the Holy Ghost above his fellows, *Heb.* i. 9. and received the Spirit without measure, *John* iii. 34. was always holy, harmless, perfectly so; a Lamb without spot, never having any disorderly passion, or corruption to conflict with; in short, since his human nature was preserved from all taint and defilement, and from every sinful infirmity; was united with the Godhead, and filled with the Spirit; whence was it then that we find him so often employed, like one of us, in supplication, prayer, reflection, &c. entering into his oratory, and continuing all night there? I answer,

1. He might have a special regard herein to our instruction, designing to leave us an example that we should follow his steps; for whatever

his own occasions were, he knew ours to be such as would require frequent retirement, and therefore he thought fit to recommend the duty to us by his own practice.

2. He might do it as an act of homage to God, and an acknowledgment of his dependence on his heavenly Father: As man he was God's creature, and as mediator the Father's servant, subordinate and subject to him in all things. It is granted all fulness dwelt in him, but *it pleased the Father* it should be so, *Col. i. 19*. He had the Spirit without measure, *but God gave it him*, *John iii. 34*. The Father sent him, sealed him, commissioned him, and he himself owns that he came down from heaven to do the Father's will, *John vi. 38*. Now, on this account, prayer, praise, and other acts of devotion, were most becoming his condition and circumstances, and a proper means of expressing his dependence, resignation to the Father's will, and subjection in the capacity of a mediator.

3. Nor can I suppose but he found need of such employment as this, *even on his own account*. Not only the *Greek* Fathers, but many others have supposed that the divinity of Christ was *quiescent* (*i. e.* did not exert and shew itself) both *during his private life*, and often *during the whole state of his humiliation*. He had indeed always necessary supports from the divinity; and after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, at his inauguration, he always had the Spirit with him *in an extraordinary manner*; was never left to any mistakes, nor under any inabilities, as was the case sometimes of all other prophets, even the greatest of them; and yet it is evident the human nature was left to feel the difficulties of his work; to bear, not only the common in-

firmities of hunger, thirst, weariness, to endure the contradiction of sinners, but the fiercest and most malicious assaults of devils. How sensibly does he complain in some of his conflicts, particularly in the garden! *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, and sore amazed.* Nay, so great was his pressure, that an angel from heaven was sent to strengthen him. On which occasions it is supposed the divinity *suspended its influence on purpose*, that the soul as well as body might taste of his sufferings, and drink of the bitter cup that was appointed him.

Now this being the state of things with our blessed Lord, it is easy to discern how seasonable, and even necessary, such employment, as I have mentioned, would be to him. In his agony the evangelist tells us, he prayed *more earnestly*, Luke xxii. 44. with more intenseness and vigour of mind; his burden then lay with greater weight upon him, and this excited a more than common importunity. Nor was it only on this extraordinary occasion that he prayed, and prayed earnestly (though now more earnestly than usual), but it seems to have been his practice, as the apostle intimates, when he says, that in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, *with strong crying and tears*, Heb. v. 9. *In the days of his flesh, i. e.* throughout his state of humiliation. He was a *man of sorrows*, and a man of prayer; and indeed being the one, it was necessary he should be the other. We may observe,

4. His *continuance* in the duty, viz. *all night*. It is indeed only said, that he continued all night in the *Proseucha* or oratory; but it is implied, that he continued for the purposes I have mentioned, *i. e.* for prayer, praise, and contem-

Matt.
xxvi. 38.
Mark
xiv. 33.
Luke
xxii. 43.

ἐκτενέστερον

Isaiah
liii. 3.

plation. The case, in short, I take to be this : Our blessed Lord having been publicly engaged in the business of his office through the day ; preaching, working miracles, answering the cavils of his enemies against himself, his doctrine, and disciples, he retires at night, and for his greater convenience, goes to one of the *Jewish* houses of worship, that stood on an hill hard by, and there passed the night in prayer, and other work, solacing himself in the presence of his heavenly Father. From whence I shall take occasion to press upon you the like practice. I need only suppose, that herein Christ was our example, and designed to be so, and that what he did infers an obligation upon us to do the like, which will be afterwards further considered and proved ; and then this will be allowed a just deduction from the words, *viz.*

That the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus are obliged, after the example of their great Master, to have their times of retirement from the world, when they are to enter into their Proseuchæ, their oratories or closets, and their converse with God.

In enlarging upon this subject I shall,

I. Say something concerning the Christian Oratory, or Place of Retirement.

II. I shall give an account of the Work and Business we have to do when we retire.

III. I shall take notice of the proper Times of Retirement.

IV. Shew the Obligations that lie on Christians, after the Example of their Lord and Master, to retire and converse with God in their Oratories.

CHAP. I.

Of the Christian Oratory, or Place of Retirement.

Concerning which, let me observe,

I. **T**HAT we should make choice of the most secret place we can. *Partly* to avoid ostentation, and all suspicion of it: Hence that of our Saviour, *Matt. vi. 6. When thou prayest, enter into thy closet.* The * word signifies an inward, or retired apartment. Having taxed the pride and vanity of the scribes and pharisees in their prayers, he advises his disciples to be as private as possible in their devotions, to enter into the closet, and having shut to the door, pray to their Father that sees in secret. We should act in our retirement with a single eye to God, and whatsoever we do, do it heartily, *as to the Lord*, and not unto man. So far as we are influenced by the lower considerations of human approbation and applause, so far religion is destroyed, and lost out of our services. Let us therefore guard ourselves against all carnal views; a tincture of pride and vain glory in our secret devotions, will make them, like the dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary, to send forth a stinking smell.

* *Ταμειῶν*, *penetræ*, a recess, a withdrawn, retired part of a place, hence *penetræ sacrificium*, is that which was wont to be offered in *interiore parte sacrarii*; and *Cicero* speaks of *Dii penetræles* in the same sense, and *Basil* of *ταμειῶν ψυχῆς*, *intimi recessus animi*.

Partly, as such a privacy will better suit some circumstances of our duty, and be more convenient for the management of our work. The use of the voice with prostration, may sometimes be of advantage. Our Saviour fell on his face in the garden, *Luke* xxii. 41. *Matt.* xxvi. 39. as did *Moses* and *Aaron*, when deprecating the divine displeasure, *Numb.* xiv. 5. in which cases persons may take a greater liberty when most withdrawn from the hearing of others.

2. We should endeavour to have our oratories, or closets, furnished for all the purposes of devotion; I mean, with such books as may be helpful to us in the several parts of our duty; as a bible, a psalm-book, a commentary, and concordance, with other religious tracts, both doctrinal and devotional, which, if well chosen, are certainly the chief ornament of a Christian's closet, and of greatest use to him in his work there.

I would also advise, that you have in your oratory, the notes of such sermons as you hear; which supposes that you take notes in public, or when you come home, and write down the more remarkable hints, and useful passages, in the sermons of the day; (which a careful and diligent hearer, who is concerned to improve every sabbath, and every sermon, will not ordinarily, at least, always, omit). Add to these *a diary* (or the account you keep of the state of your own souls.) In your offices, or shops, you have the state of your trade in journals, ledgers, and other books of account; in your oratories you have * *spiritual account-books*, several reckonings

* Concerning the manner and use of such diaries, more will be said afterward, if I consider the extraordinary work of retirement.

stated and recorded between God and you, which are to be frequently perused, and improved, in the course of your closet-religion.

3. Some have thought it subservient to the ends of retirement, to have their oratory, or place of devotion, *set apart for, and appropriated thereto*. “It would be a thing of singular use,” says Dr. *Patrick*, “if those that have so much room in their house, would set some little place apart for holy duties, and let it be acquainted with no other thoughts but of God and their own souls: This would be a means of putting all other employments and thoughts out of mind, which would all leave us when we came to that place where they were strangers; none of them would be so bold as to tread in that place, which is washed with tears; they would not draw breath, nor live in that place, where there is no air, but sighs and prayers; they would never abide in that room, where no inhabitant is, but God; for we find, if we come to any place, where something of concernment has been done by us, the very sight of the place revives the image of the thing; if therefore we had a place of privacy, where we did nothing but read, and pray, and invite God into our company, as soon as we did but look into it, the face of God would meet us, and we should be struck with a certain awe and reverence from his presence, that uses to be there with us: But if a man pray in his shop, or counting-house, the thoughts of money will be apt to meet him, his bills and bonds will thrust themselves into his mind, &c.”

But as this cannot be expected from the main body of Christians (that they should be so well

accommodated I mean), so it is not of that importance, as to require any great solicitude about it. The same place may, no doubt, serve for sacred and common work, at distant intervals, and different times, provided we attend both with due watchfulness, and with a suitable temper of mind: If the heart be in frame, the Christian may be devout and serious in any place that is tolerably convenient: However, I shall not take upon me to deny what this grave author and others may assert from their own experience: Some probably may find it a sort of a natural help to their devotion, to have their little oratory reserved, as a place of solemn interview with God; never suffering any worldly affairs to intrude into it. No doubt but *Jacob's* sight of his pillar would excite his devotion, and give a solemnity to the frame of his mind, when he recollected what passed between God and him there: But in this I leave every one to their own liberty; I would only say, that as the work I am about to recommend to you, is of the greatest importance of any in the world; so you should endeavour to be provided for it, in the best manner your circumstances will allow: A convenient apartment, and suitable supplies of good books are very desirable; and methinks I would rather choose to want the ornament of a few pictures, and a cupboard of plate or *china*, than these helps for my soul.

Genesis
xxviii. 18.

4. I add, such as cannot attain to these best accommodations, must not however neglect the duties of the closet, but perform them as well as they can, under all their disadvantages. You have, it may be, no choice of apartments, which is the case of those families that have but one room for all purposes; yet something of closet-

religion is expected from them, and should be performed notwithstanding. A curtain may serve to make a sort of an oratory, or the rest may withdraw and leave the room to one, which may be done *in turns*; and sometimes you may choose *Isaac's* oratory, which was the open field, *Gen. xxiv. 63. he went out to meditate, or pray at the evening-tide.*

CHAP. II. SECT. I.

Of the Work to be done in Retirement. Of reading the holy Scriptures. Proper Choice to be made of the Scriptures read. The Method to be fixed by a Calendar. The Scriptures read, to be understood, and expounded to ourselves. Some Examples of such Exposition.

I AM in the next place to give an account of the work and business we have to do when we retire. Our Lord went into an oratory to pray, *i. e.* to converse with God and his Father, as I have explained it; and this is to be our employment in our closets. I shall consider it both as ordinary and stated, and extraordinary and occasional: The latter I may afterwards speak to in a distinct discourse, and shall at present confine myself to the *stated, and ordinary work* of retirement.

1. One part of the duty of the closet is a *devout reading of the holy scriptures*. Some have

thought that the *Jewish Proseuchæ*, or oratories, were appropriated to prayer, and that they did not use to read the law in them; which they make one difference between the *Proseuchæ*, and synagogues: But whatever there may be in this, it is certain the christian oratories will admit of this exercise; we are *there* to converse with God in his word, as well as in prayer. The *Romanists* indeed not only deny this to be the duty of the laity, but have made it impossible to them, whilst they forbid them the use of the holy scriptures (having put the bible itself, translated into the mother-tongue, into their *Index Expurgatorius*). In *Protestant* countries, particularly in *England*, they are most on the reserve in this matter, and will, upon occasion, grant their licence to *certain* persons to have the *Bible* in their own language; which, implies, however, that it is not free for all, nor for any, without their permission, and how few can obtain that favour is well known. But never was there a more daring usurpation of proud and presumptuous worms; a more open affront offered to the great Lawgiver of the church, or a grosser instance of unmercifulness to the souls of men. It was a just complaint of archbishop *Tillotson* on this head, “ ’Tis a hard case,” says he, “ the church of *Rome* reduces men to, who will neither allow them any salvation out of their church, nor the best and most effectual means of salvation when in it.”

But as I am not at present concerned with these men, I shall not spend any time in confuting their cavils: You know your right and liberty in this respect; your bibles lie open to you; you are not only allowed, but invited and encouraged to make diligent constant use of

them; which is what I would on this occasion earnestly recommend to you. God has wrote unto you the *great things of his law*: Do not account them as *strange things*; do not neglect them as foreign things, that you have no interest in, or concern with; but let it be a part of your daily closet-religion to peruse your bibles; to meditate on the law of the Lord, and the great things thereof.

And this being a matter of the utmost consequence, and what, it may be, the generality of Christians are as defective in, as in any other branch of closet-devotion, I shall endeavour your assistance in the best manner I can: And shall first lay before you some directions how to proceed in the discharge of this duty, and then offer some considerations to press it upon you. I will begin with the directions.

First, Make choice of proper parts, and books of scripture for your reading. I cannot admit that reading scripture in a direct order, beginning at *Genesis*, and going through the several books in course, as they lie in our bible, is the best and most profitable method: Not but that all scripture is useful for the ends and purposes for which it was wrote, and all to be read and studied; but all is not alike useful to any, much less alike easy to be understood, or alike fitted for the service of the closet. There are many prophecies, several of the Levitical institutions, genealogies, &c. that the main body of Christians can make but little improvement of (especially in a way of worship) and I cannot think these should be read by them, *as often* as other parts of scripture, which are better suited to their capacity, and to the ends of their retirement; and therefore, I say, make a *prudent choice* of

scripture; select those parts of the *Bible* that you can best understand, and best improve, and let these be the subject of your more constant reading. What particular books you should choose for this purpose, I leave to yourselves to judge; only would suggest, that some previous inquiry and study may be requisite, to fit such and such books for the purpose I am speaking of. Suppose, for instance, you make choice of the book of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, the *Psalms*, or any other of the Old Testament, or any part of these; you should endeavour, by reading commentators upon them, &c. to prepare them for the oratory. So that there is a twofold reading of scripture; the one in a way of rational study and inquiry, the other in a way of devotion; and it is the former of these I am here recommending as a help to the latter; and according to your proficiency and improvement thereby, you will have more or less of the scripture fitted for the closet.

Secondly, Fix the method of reading, and take care to have your work cut out beforehand, that you may know what portion of scripture you are to apply yourselves to from time to time; and don't satisfy yourselves to read *any where*, as the Bible opens, without design or choice. For instance, if you intend to go through this or that book of the Old Testament, in your stated reading, several of the *Psalms*, and most of the books of the New Testament, I would cast them into a sort of a *Calendar*; as thus:

MARCH 1.	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Gen. i.} \\ \textit{Psalm i.} \\ \textit{Matt. i.} \end{array} \right.$	Or if three chapters be too much, take two of them:
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MAR. } *Gen. i.* MAR. 2. } *Matt. i.* MAR. 3. } *Gen. ii.*
 1. } *Psal. i.* } *Psal. ii.* } *Psal. iii.*

or any other that you appoint for your *Calendar*; and in the same order you may go through the rest of the books you have chosen for this service: By which, you see, I would generally have a psalm (a select psalm, not always in course) joined with every other part of scripture, in your daily reading, as being exceeding proper to assist your devotion. This *Calendar* you may either form for a shorter or longer time; for a year, or a month, or a week, as you see cause. Only take care to have a supply of new matter for your *Calendar*, before the old is quite exhausted.

Thirdly, Endeavour to comprehend, as well as you can, the sense and meaning of what you read. It is not the sound of words that is scripture, but the sense of them; nor is there any more devotion in perusing an *English* translation of the Bible than a *Latin* one, when you understand both alike, *i. e.* understand neither. It was a very proper question of *Philip* to the eunuch, when he found him reading his Bible, *Understandest thou, says he, what thou readest?* Acts viii. 30. We should often put this question to ourselves, and never think we are employed, as becomes those that are worshipping God, and aiming at the edification of our own souls, in reading the scripture, unless in some measure we understand what we read; to which purpose (besides the previous study, before advised to, which has brought such particular books into your *Calendar*) you will find it necessary, now and then at least, on this occasion also, to make use of your concordance and com-

mentator. We do not indeed pretend to have any infallible expositions of scripture, but we have several good helps for the better understanding of it, and should not despise or neglect them. Which of the numerous commentators to prefer, I shall not take upon me here to direct; but ordinarily, such as are short, and give the literal sense in a few words, with an easy and clear connexion, are best fitted for your assistance in your daily reading.

Fourthly, Expound that part of scripture that lies before you, to yourselves; preach upon it to your own hearts, and improve it so as may best answer the purposes of devotion; I mean the scripture of the day, as I may call it, and which your *Calendar* now directs you to. There is certainly a difference between reading the scripture at other times, when we study it very much, as we do common books, with a design chiefly to find out its meaning, and reading it *as a part of worship*; in which devout affections are to be exercised, and endeavours used to work it upon our hearts, by a suitable and close application, as the matter requires.

That I may fully explain my meaning, and encourage you to the practice of a duty of exceeding moment, as I apprehend this to be, I shall give you several examples and specimens of what I intend; some more loose and general, others more exact and methodical. Suppose the section or portion of scripture you are to read be *Gen. i. Psal. i.* it is not enough that you read these over, and understand something of the meaning of them, and so close the book without further thought or reflection; but you are to expound, as I said, what you have read, and apply it to your own hearts as well as you can.

As for example, *Gen. i.* (the chapter being read), I have here, say you, an account of the creation of the world in six days; the particulars, the order and manner of the work; that it was accomplished by the Almighty's *fiat*; for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth; he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast; he only said (I here read) *let there be light*, and there was light; *let there be a firmament*, and there was a firmament, &c. I have also an account of the formation of man, how he was distinguished from the rest of the creatures, being made upon consultation, as it were, and in the image and likeness of God. The chapter concludes with God's review of his work, and approbation of it. God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good; exactly suited to answer the end of its creation, and the design of the all-wise Creator: And how full a demonstration is here of an eternal, necessary, infinitely perfect Being! How strong a proof of the existence of that God, whom, as a Christian, I am taught to worship! How authentic an history of the original of all things; and that with such clearness and satisfaction, as the heathen philosophy could never attain to! What an illustration is here of the attributes and perfection of the divine nature! How amazing that power that spoke such a world as this into being! How admirable the wisdom that shines forth in the variety, harmony, and order of all things! And, O my soul! how fit an object is this glorious Being of thy fear, thy love, thy trust, dependence, &c.

And having thus glanced at some passages in this chapter, in a more general way, you may

proceed to the first psalm, supposed also a part of the present portion of scripture you have before you, which you may consider a little more fully now, or on another occasion.

In this psalm (say you) I observe 1. The character of a pious and blessed man, ver. 1. 2. An account of his blessedness, v. 1, 3. 3. This illustrated from the opposite state of the ungodly, v. 4, 5. 4. The reason of both, v. 6.

1. The character of the pious and blessed man, and this negative in three particulars, v. 1. *He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*; by which it will be easy to apprehend is meant, that in his principles, temper, conduct, and life, he is distinguished from such persons: He doth not approve of their course, imitate their examples, and walk in their way; their way of vanity, worldliness, pride, profaneness, neglect of God and religion, &c. He may, in the surprise of a temptation, step into the way of sinners, but he does not *walk* in it, *stand* in it; much less does he seat himself in the chair of the scorner, inwardly despising religion, and making a jest of sacred things. And then here is the positive character of the blessed man, v. 2. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night: The holy scriptures are his study, his exercise, and constant entertainment. He delights in the history of scripture, as it contains a most authentic account of the great foundations of all religion; the creation of the world, the origin of man, the occasion of his apostacy, and the glorious plan of redemption by the promised *Messias*: He delights in the precepts of it, as a most exact rule of life; in the exceeding great

and precious promises of it, a never-failing spring of the strongest consolation; and in the whole, as it is a means of sanctifying the nature, enriching the mind, and of pleasing intercourse with heaven, for so he finds it. It follows (and no wonder) *that he meditates therein day and night, i. e.* he studies it with diligence, constancy, and care.

2. Here is further to be observed, the account given of the blessedness of such an one, which is asserted in general terms, v. 1. Blessed is the man, or, *O the blessedness of that man*, as I remember I have heard the original imports; he is certainly, fully, and every way blessed; and though I do not pretend to understand the *Hebrew* criticism (as must be supposed the case of many whom I would willingly engage in this exercise), yet methinks I can readily close with the sense of it; for surely none on earth are happy, so happy as the persons here described, *they that delight in God and his word*: Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them. After this general intimation of the good man's blessedness, here is a particular instance, wherein he is blessed, v. 3. *He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water*, which bringeth forth its fruit in its season, &c. planted by the rivers of water, from whence it is supplied with sufficient moisture, so that it remains always fresh, and is always fruitful; and to such a tree is the good man compared, who delights in the law of the Lord, &c. And there seem two things implied in this similitude, that the main happiness of a Christian lies in his being fruitful, ready to every good work, and abounding therein; and that God's law, and his delight

therein, has a special influence upon his fruitfulness. What a canal of water is to the tree planted on its bank, that is the holy scripture to the believer, he derives refreshing, fructifying streams from thence.

And now, how easy are such remarks as these ?

1. That religion is the only true and solid foundation for happiness : O the blessedness of — Of whom ? Not the rich, the mighty, the noble, as such ; but of the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, but delights in God's law. Blessedness is annexed to the character, not of the great, but good : *the fear of the Lord is the beginning* (or chief point) *of wisdom*, Psal. cxi. 10. 2. It is plain, as there are two different states in the other world, so there are two *different sorts of persons* in this world, distinguished by their counsels, principles, tempers, and ways : What the one are, the other are not. 3. The great distinction of these two sorts of persons, is very much founded on their different regard to the divine law : *The one* neglect it, conducting themselves by measures and counsels of their own, and not by those of the divine law, as is here intimated ; their life is framed according to carnal, worldly maxims, praising such as do well for, or to themselves, *Psalms* xlix. 18. and blessing the covetous, whom the Lord abhors, *Psalms* x. 3. their pride, ambition, and other lusts, prescribe laws to them. *The other sort* live by an higher and more divine rule : God's law is their delight, &c. 4. Of how much consequence is it, to a good man, rightly to value, study, and delight in the word of God ! From hence he is distinguished from the ungodly ; from hence his character, from hence his bless-

edness and fruitfulness. O! may I never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast honoured me, by them thou hast quickened me.

Fifthly, I observe the false notions the world has of happiness: Let the men of this world judge of it, how different will their sentence be from that which is here pronounced by the inspiring Spirit? The good man, says he, is blessed, *for* he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that is constantly and seasonably fruitful. Fruitfulness is the Christian's blessedness; to have an heart to love and serve God, to converse with him, in his word, providences, ordinances; to bring forth the fruits of justice, righteousness, piety, in all the branches of it; to be able to abound in the work of the Lord; to be furnished to every good word and work; *this is blessedness*. Lord, grant me this: I need, I desire no more!

3. This blessed state is illustrated by the opposite state of the ungodly: In general, *the ungodly are not so*, v. 4. they neither answer the character, nor are entitled to the happiness of the pious man; they delight not in the divine law, are not like the tree planted by the rivers of water, &c. but, *are as the chaff, which the wind driveth away*; of little worth, and no stability. It follows, *wherefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous*, i. e. they shall be cast and condemned in the great day of the Lord, and not admitted into the general assembly and church of the first-born.

4. The psalm concludes with the reason of both, *viz.* the happiness of one, and the misery of the other. The *Lord knows*, that is, approves the way of the righteous, and therefore, as is

implied, he is blessed; but, as must be also implied, he knows not, approves not the way of the ungodly, and therefore, *it shall perish*. And from hence I observe, 1. How worthless and vile the ungodly are: Whatever names and titles they are distinguished by, and with whatever grandeur and pomp they appear, they are, in God's account, *as chaff*, and accordingly represented as worthy of contempt, *Psaln xv. 4.* 2. What a change will there be hereafter in the state of things! *The ungodly shall not stand in judgment, &c.* Now we often see the reverse of this: *In the place of judgment, iniquity is there*; the saints, the excellent of the earth are frequently cast out, dishonoured, despised; but hereafter the tables will be turned; a glorious distinction shall be made in favour of them: *The upright shall have dominion in the morning.* 3. How transient and short-lived is that delusion of an happiness that ungodly men glory in! What a dream is it! They are as chaff, which the wind driveth away, and shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the herb. 4. God is judge, and it is by his sentence that every one must stand or fall at last; as he knows, and approves our way, or otherwise, so will our state be determined for ever. And O! my soul, learn from hence thy duty, thy interest, thy happiness; what to choose, and what to pursue: Guard against the counsel and way of the ungodly: If sinners entice thee, consent thou not; cast not in thy lot amongst them, but refrain thy foot from their path; they are far from blessedness, whatever they may imagine: Blessed is the man that walks not with them; their schemes and projects, as they are wholly earthly and sensual, confined within the narrow bounds

of time, and formed without regard to the superior wisdom of God, in his word; will shortly come to nothing; do not therefore choose with them, or live by their measures. In the mean time, be not disturbed at their success, and seemingly prosperous state: *Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious because of the workers of iniquity*: They are but as chaff, and shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire; the Lord approves not their way, and it shall perish. Lord, teach me thy statutes; help me to make thy law my delight, and to rest in thy favour, as my supreme happiness!

For another specimen of the method prescribed, let us a little consider *Matth.* i. also marked in the Calendar. The chapter being read, you proceed thus: I find, say you, in this chapter, 1. A pedigree of Christ, or a catalogue of his ancestors, from whence he proceeded. I have often heard of some difficulties in this genealogy, which the *Jews*, and other enemies of the Christian faith, have objected to us; but I thank God, they are no stumbling-block in my way. The great design of it, no question, is to assure us, that Jesus Christ descended from the families, to which he was promised, and from those fathers, of whom, as concerning the flesh, he was to come: And this being highly necessary to be known, I find the evangelist, before the relation of his conception and birth, takes care to clear that matter, and gives us his pedigree; as *Luke* does, before he enters upon the account of his public ministry. For the better understanding, and improvement of this more difficult part of scripture, let me observe, 1. That according to ancient promises and prophecies, the *Messiah* was to be of the family of *Abraham*,

Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18. The promises were made to *Abraham*, and his seed, *Gal.* iii. 16. and accordingly he took on him the seed of *Abraham*, *Heb.* ii. 16. He was also promised to *David* frequently, *2 Sam.* vii. 16. *Psalms* lxxxix. 4. 29. which implied, that of the fruit of his body God would raise up Christ, to sit upon his throne, *Acts* ii. 30. 2. I observe, that he is by the evangelist first mentioned as of the family of *David*, though promised long before to *Abraham*. The reason of which some have thought to be, that the promise to *David* was later, and most in the mind of the *Jews*, who universally expected their *Messiah* out of the house of *David*, and as the son of *David*, *Matth.* ix. 27. xv. 22. 3. I observe, that for greater clearness, for help of the memory, or some other reason, the evangelist divides his account into three remarkable periods (three times fourteen generations), viz. from *Abraham* to *David*; from *David* to the captivity; from the captivity to the birth of Christ. The first division includes the age of the patriarchs; the second, that of the kingdom and temple, till its ruin; the third begins at the captivity, when the kingdom and temple were destroyed, and reaches to the *Messiah*: The first brought the state to glory, in the kingdom of *David*; the second, to misery, in the captivity of *Babylon*; and the third, to glory again, in the kingdom of Christ. 4. Though I may not be able to answer all cavils, and remove all objections, which may be made against some particulars in this genealogy, this need not stagger my faith. The evangelist expressly asserts, that Jesus Christ was the son of *David*, and *Abraham*; and not only so, but proceeds to prove it, in a table of his descent; which he

left to the perusal and judgment of the age : Nor did I ever hear, that the *Jews* of that time, who were skilled, to a nicety, in matters of this nature, ever charged the evangelist with mistakes : So that if there should be found any names, or other difficulties, that the unlearned, such as myself, cannot account for at this distance, I have not the least reason from thence, to conclude against the authority of the evangelist, but must rather impute it to the want of those means of satisfaction, in these particulars, that the *Jews* then had, but we want. It was necessary that the evangelist should prove, that Christ was of the family of *David*, otherwise he had better not have attempted any thing of a pedigree ; and it is absurd to think he would expose to public view a table that was liable to exception : Though, after all, there are no difficulties, but what I find learned men are able to remove. And therefore,

5. I conclude that *Jesus Christ* is really the Son of *Abraham* and of *David*, according to ancient prophecies, and consequently that so far he answers the character of the promised *Messiah*. Here then I have a foundation for my faith. Had he wanted this qualification, all the miracles he wrought would not have entitled him to the dignity of the *Messiahship* ; but since this point is cleared, I am the better prepared to attend the other evidences, and peruse with greater regard the history of him.

I find also in this chapter an account of the conception and birth of Christ, from the 18th to the 24th verse : Where, 1. I observe the strait *Joseph* was in : *Joseph* and *Mary* were espoused, but not married, and before they came together, he apprehends her to be with child, and, know-

διεικας.

ing nothing of the mystery, concludes she had been unfaithful to him; whereupon he resolves not to take her to wife, but dismiss her: For being *a just man*, he would not receive into his bosom a supposed adulteress; but then he resolves to do it privately, concealing the espousals, *being a merciful and good man* (which some suppose the sense of the word here used), and therefore was unwilling to expose her to the rigour of the law, and the penalty due to an adulteress; charity suggesting, no question, many things in her favour. 2. The whole matter is cleared up to him; for whilst he was reasoning with himself, and attending the several pleas in his own breast (as we may suppose) of justice to the demands of the law, mercy to the offender, and tenderness to one he entirely loved, the angel of the Lord, in a dream, makes known the mystery, and assures him, *she was with child of the Holy Ghost*, and therefore he need not fear any disgrace by owning the relation. 3. His birth is foretold, and his name given him by the same angel, *She shall bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins*, v. 21. The name imports his office, which was to be a spiritual deliverer, to save from sin; and the same was given him by his parents, at his circumcision, it is likely; and, no question, he went by that name during his private life (as well as afterwards), *Jesus*, or *Joshua the carpenter's son*. 4. It is remarked, that hereby an ancient prophecy was accomplished, v. 22. *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and they shall call his name Immanuel*, i. e. he shall be Immanuel, God with us, God among men, as his works manifested him to be. 5. The chap-

ter concludes with *Joseph's* obedience to the vision ; he takes her to wife ; yet out of reverence to so extraordinary a conception, and by special providence of God, abstains from her till she is delivered ; and then the holy infant is named *Jesus*.

But, O my soul ! what shall I say to these things ? 1. Pause a little, and with all humble devotion contemplate this surprising subject : How justly does the prophet say his name shall be called *Wonderful* ! A virgin with child ! with Isa. ix. 6. child of the Holy Ghost ! Let angels and men bow the head and adore ! *Ask of the days that* Deut. iv. *are past, since the day that God created man on* ^{32.} *the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven to the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is :* No, it is a *new thing* created in the earth : Never was there such a conception and such a birth ! 2. What great expectations may we justly have from so extraordinary a person ; and what an admirable preparation is here for his high function ! Was he to reform a degenerate world, by teaching and example ? Was he to exhibit a perfect pattern of virtue and religion ? Was he to be a public victim for the expiation of sin ? Behold a miracle in his conception, so far fitting him for all this ! 3. What esteem and reverence, &c. is due to this wonderful Person, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a Virgin ! O my soul ! read with suitable regard the history of his life ; receive with all submission his doctrine, and resign to his authority. 4. How comfortable the name he bears, *Jesus, a Saviour* ! it is as ointment poured forth, the most grateful sound in the world to lost and perishing sinners : And methinks there is some assurance of the success of

this beneficial office, in that the name is given him by an angel from heaven, sent upon this occasion, and, no question, with commission thus to name and characterise the divine birth.

5. I observe some restriction and limitation in the salvation Jesus is author of: *He shall save his people from their sins*; only the people of the *Messiah* will be eventually saved by him; and who these are the royal prophet intimates, *Psal. lxxxix. 30. 32 (viz.)* such as forsake not his law, but walk in his judgment; that are under an holy restorative, reforming discipline, such as believe in him (as their character is elsewhere expressed) and are subject to him: Such as partake of his anointing, have the same temper and complexion that he had, *Rom. viii. 29*. In short, such as are a peculiar people, sanctified by his word and Spirit, and zealous of good works.

συμμόρ-
φες.

And then I observe he saves them from their sins, not in them. And now, O my soul! with what satisfaction may I peruse this part of scripture! Behold here the accomplishment of many ancient prophetic oracles: Surely this is he that was to come, nor will I look for another; this is that Seed in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed; *the seed of the woman* by way of distinction and peculiarity; born of a virgin, by the overshadowing mysterious influences of the divine Spirit: And as his errand was kind, beneficent, suitable to my necessities, as he is Jesus a Saviour, may I secure my part and interest in him; may I be one of his people; may I accept the salvation he came to bestow, *viz. a salvation from sin*: O my soul, never call him *Jesus*, if he be not *thy Lord*: He saves by his blood, and by his Spirit; as Jesus he both aton-

eth and sanctifieth ; nor must thou expect the benefit of his cross, if thou dislikest his sceptre.

The second psalm will offer itself in your Calendar at the same time, as part of the scripture next to be read, now or afterward, when you address yourself to the like work. You may proceed in some such manner as this. You, 1. inquire into the penman and occasion of the psalm ; which is ordinarily the best key to let us into the understanding of it ; and though we have neither of these mentioned in the inscription or title, yet the apostle assures us *David* wrote it, *Acts* iv. 25. and it may be your commentator may suggest, the occasion probably was his peaceful settlement on the throne of *Judah* and *Israel*, after the opposition he met with from the *Philistines*, *Moabites*, *Syrians*, &c. in reflecting upon which matter the Spirit of God led him to expressions fit and designed to represent the establishment of the *Messiah* in his kingdom, and his triumph over all his enemies. In the beginning of the psalm he expostulates with, and insults, as it were, the malicious opposers of his government : *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ?* They set themselves against him (the Lord's anointed), which in the spiritual sense was fulfilled in his Son the *Messiah*, and the same part acted over again by *Herod*, *Pontius Pilate*, and the rulers of *Israel*, *Acts* iv. 27. From the 4th to the 10th verse, he shews the vanity of their attempts, as they were opposing the counsel and appointment of God, both with respect to *David* and the great *Messiah* : He that sat in the heavens despised the malice, and laughed at the weak efforts of such worms : Christ the *Messiah* was, by the decree of God, to sit upon the throne ty-

pified by *David's*, to rule over the Gentile world, with absolute authority and irresistible power. This is the counsel of God, and it shall stand ; for he shall reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet, dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He concludes the psalm with suitable advice, that all would own, and make obeisance to this mighty Sovereign. And hence I observe, 1. That the psalms are not human composures. God spake by the mouth of his servant *David*, says the apostle, *Acts* iv. 25. referring to this very psalm : They are part of that scripture, which is given by divine * inspiration, and accordingly I would peruse them. 2. The opposition Christ met with is what was foretold, and comparing the prophecy and history together, the prediction and event, my faith is the more confirmed in the *Messiah*. It is no objection to me against my Saviour, that the rulers did not so readily believe in him : The prophecy represented that thus it should be, and as the scripture *must* be, so here it was fulfilled. 3. It is evident Christ's kingdom stands on a rock, and cannot be shaken, *viz.* The decree and stipulation of God : He has by oath made him a

* The inspiration of the penmen of scripture was, no question, different, according to the different nature of the subjects they were concerned with. Sometimes the inspiring Spirit led the prophet (the person he inspired) to his subject, and supplied it to him, furnishing him with the entire matter, saying to him, as the *Alpha* and *Omega* to *John*, what thou seest write in a book. At other times, I suppose, he only struck in with the meditation, which particular occasions might invite to, directing and improving it : So that the composure was at once the work of the devout mind, and expressive of its present frame, and yet the inspiration of the Holy Ghost ; which I take to be the case, often at least, of *David* and other psalmists.

royal priest for ever ; and though the heathen rage, *it is in vain* ; the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church : He will *strike through kings in the day of his wrath*, Psal. cx. 4, 5. 4. Be convinced then, O my soul ! of thy duty and thy interest : Be wise, be instructed in this great and momentous affair ; *kiss the Son, lest he be angry* ; bow to his sceptre, or thou shalt perish in his wrath, be broken by his iron rod. Lord, enthrone thyself in my heart, take fuller possession of my soul ; grant me the inheritance of those that fear thee ; *the blessedness of those that trust in thee*.

SECT. II.

Other Specimens of the Method proposed upon Gen. ii. Psal. iii. Psal. iv.

LET me offer another specimen, still in the course of your *Calendar*, which is *Gen. ii.* The chapter read, I find here, say you (reviewing what was more particularly related in the foregoing chapter) that the world and all the kinds of creatures in it, were made in six days, and that to preserve the memory of so glorious a work, and give an opportunity of conversing with the Author, *a sabbath*, or day of holy rest, is appointed : *God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it*, v. 3. And if infinite wisdom saw it convenient for innocent man in paradise, to have a stated time of solemn religion, how much more necessary is it for him in his present depraved

state, when he is fallen into such a forgetfulness of God, his duty and happiness ! O my soul ! be thankful for this day ; own the authority, wisdom, and goodness of God in the appointment of it ; *remember to keep it holy* ; endeavour to abstract and withdraw thy thoughts from earthly things, and enter upon the life of heaven, as far as thou canst on this day. Let it be as one of the days of heaven to thee : Sabbath-religion was from the creation ; it is the good old way, walk in it, and never be ashamed of it ; the homage due to the Creator, the care of thy own soul demands this of thee.

As in the former chapter I read of the creation of man, and the dignity conferred on him therein ; so in the summary repetition of things in this chapter, the matter is resumed, and further explained, v. 7. *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life* : Where I observe a signal instance of that power of God, who could raise out of the dust of the earth so admirable a structure as the human body. I observe also the soul has a different original from that of the body ; for whilst the one was formed of dust, the other is breathed from God himself, an intimation of that great article of religion, *the immortality of the soul* ; its capacity of existence separate from the body, and without dependence upon it : And this I am assured it shall do ; for when the dust (that is, the body made out of dust, as I here read) returns to the earth as it was, the soul shall return to God that gave it, *Eccles. xii.* I further observe the dignity and excellency of the soul above the body ; the one is *of the earth, earthly*, the other is a spirit from heaven ; the one formed out of dust, the other

breathed from God in an immediate manner ; *particula divinæ auræ*, as the poet calls it : The ^{Hor. lib.} breath of life, a ray of divinity, the offspring of ^{2. Sat. 2.} God. O may I duly value, and with suitable care and concern secure the interest of mine immortal soul ! and not *despise*, prostitute, sacrifice it for the sake of a little animated dust ; this lump of earth, *my vile body*.

God having constituted man lord of this lower creation, provides, for his greater comfort and delight, a most pleasant garden, where he was to reside, and which he was to dress and keep, v. 14, 15. and here he received a law, not to eat of a certain tree, on pain of death, v. 17. he had free enjoyment of all the rest, but this he must not touch : with reference to which let me observe, 1. That this is not properly the covenant of works God made with innocent man ; *that was before* ; the terms of which were contained and revealed in nature, and the duties of it engraven on the heart of man. 2. That this was only a *positive law*, subservient to the covenant of nature, designed to try man's obedience to his Creator and sovereign, according to the original antecedent law he was under ; and therefore a thing indifferent in itself was made choice of for this purpose, that it might appear whether he would be subject to the mere will of his maker, when the matter required of him had no intrinsic goodness in it to influence his obedience. So that 3. this command or restraint was properly *an expression of God's sovereignty*, and intended as a mark thereof, and of his creature's dependence and subjection (*q. d.*) “ Hear, O *Adam*, I have “ made thee my vicegerent in the world, and “ have given thee all the creatures, and all paradise for thy subsistence and delight ; only this

“ is a reserved right, in token that in the throne
 “ I am greater than thou. Enjoy thy God, thy-
 “ self, and a whole world ; only, on thy alle-
 “ giance, *touch not this fruit.*”

4. The penalty was death ; which is a general word, including all sorts of miseries, of body and soul, time and eternity : In this extent and latitude, in part at least, it is expounded in the next chapter, (when the sentence is pronounced against the several offenders, and branched out into its particulars) and accordingly it is executed upon the apostate unbelieving world, and *in part* upon all mankind. It was this transgression that opened the sluices, and let in all the calamities which have overflowed us : The vanity, the sorrow, suffering, and pain, under which the whole creation groans ; sickness of body, horror of conscience, death, and even hell are the fruit of sin, (and originally spring from this sin, as the occasion of actual sin ;) all the evil we suffer, all we fear is comprehended in that threatening, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* There was indeed a reprieve and a redemption from the full curse : but all misery, both in kind and degree, became due ; and so much is inflicted still even on the redeemed world, as makes them feel that they have sinned, and that sin is an evil thing and bitter. 5. When I reflect on the nature of the offence, I cannot think the punishment at all unjust, or disproportioned to the crime ; nor do they consider things with any great judgment or modesty that presume, as the manner of some poor worms is, to arraign the great Lawgiver on this account, charging him foolishly : Threaten death and hell, say they, for eating an apple ! What equity ! But if it was so small a matter as they pretend, the more inexcusable the offender,

that would not abstain ; especially when the will of God was so express. In short, the disobedience of this fact was no less than *an attempt to cast off God's sovereignty* : It was an act of open rebellion, a sort of *disputing the throne with the Almighty* ; and whether the unhappy aspiring creature had not something of this in view (as may seem implied in what the serpent insinuated, v. 5. *Ye shall be as Gods*) I shall not say : But how heinous the crime, for dust thus to rebel ! how deserving of the penalty ! and how exceeding abundant that mercy which propounded a saviour ! the grace that found a ransom !

And, O my soul, contemplate in this instance, the horrid nature of sin : every actual, *deliberate, known sin*, is *after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, Rom. v. 14. It is a rejecting of God's authority, and setting up our wills against his. O ! stand in awe, and sin not : Let a *thus says the Lord*, determine thy obedience in every instance ; let the God that made thee always rule thee : There is so much evil and malignity in a *wilful, allowed, deliberate transgression*, that no grace revealed to us will excuse it, or pardon it, *without suitable repentance* ; and, I question not, had *Adam* persisted in a course of such iniquity, even after God's treaty of grace with him, he had perished, notwithstanding the new covenant, and the merit of the promised seed. Lord, subdue my will entirely to thine ; keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, that I may be innocent from the great transgression.

Adam being thus placed in paradise and favoured with the enjoyments thereof, yet wants something to complete his happiness ; God himself declares his present state defective, v. 18. *It is not good that man should be alone*, I will make him

an help meet for him ; and accordingly, in the method and way here related, a *second self* is formed out of him, an *Isha* from *Ish*) to be partner of his cares, and joys, and to be joined with him in an inviolable bond of love and affection. Thus was the man advanced, and thus indulged by the bounty of his Creator; the consideration of which highly aggravates the guilt of his offence : He sinned when goodness did most abound. May it be a warning to all his posterity ! There seemed to want but one thing to perfect the happiness of paradise, and no sooner is that granted, but all is lost. O my soul ! guard against the snares of a prosperous state ; when thou hast a garden, and an *Eve*, beware of the serpent ; *David* was safe while attending the sheepfolds, and praying in caves and deserts ; but when advanced to the throne, how woefully did he miscarry ?

I will subjoin another example, *viz.* the third psalm, which follows in the Calendar. The psalm being read; you make your remarks in some such way as this. I learn from the title of the psalm, the penman, and occasion ; *A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son* : And here say you, 1. I observe the distress this great and good man was in ; the particulars of which I read in the history, 2 *Sam.* xv. 12. The conspiracy against him was so strong, that his case was thought desperate : *Many said, there was no help for him in God.* 2. I observe the exercise of his faith in a most eminent degree on this sorrowful occasion : *But thou, Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, &c.* v. 3. He casts his burden on the Lord, and rests with unshaken confidence on his power and goodness. In the 4th verse, he signifies what course he took in former troubles ; or if the psalm was penned after the danger was over, it intimates

what he did in his present trouble, and shows with what success : *I cried to the Lord with my voice, and he heard me* ; the words import his earnestness and importunity. And hence, O my soul, learn to expect troubles and exercises in the world ; so great a saint as *David*, thou seest, was not free from them ; Nor object against any instances of trial the divine wisdom shall appoint. Was not *David* touched in a tender part, when his own subjects rose up against him, and his own son was at the head of them ? And yet he quarrels not. Endeavour to take up thy cross ; to drink the cup thy heavenly Father puts in thine hand : We are not to chuse our burdens, but bear them, when God lays them on. O spare me in this ; any thing but this, we are apt foolishly to say ; and so might *David* ; but neither was he, nor am I, left to chuse. Learn also, O my soul, from the example of this good man, to make God thy refuge in time of trouble ; use him as thy shield ; cry to him with thy voice ; and leave thy concerns in his hand : Thus did *David* in this hour of difficulty, and it was his usual course, as appears from his psalms.

3. I observe the blessed fruit of his faith, and prayer : How easy, how calm was *David* here-upon ! v. 5, 6. He had committed himself and cause to God, and got on the top of Mount *Olivet*, and there worshipped, as we are told in the history, 2 *Sam.* xv. 32. And how happy the success ! How composed and serene his mind ! *I laid me down*, says he, *and slept* ; *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people*, &c. And now, I suppose, it was, when in this employment, and in this blessed frame, that he uttered those admirable words, 2 *Sam.* xv. 25, 26. *Carry back the ark of God into the city : if I shall find fa-*

*your in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation ; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him, (q. d.) a king, or a victim, something, or nothing, as thou, Lord, pleasest : And having thus thrown himself at the feet of the Most High, and poured out his soul on the mount, whither he retired for devotion ; having disburthened himself of all his anxious, solicitous thoughts ; lo, all is hush, and still within ; and he can sleep in the midst of terrors and deaths ! v. 5. Surely never did faith more triumph, never was prayer more effectual. O my soul ! learn this way of intercourse with thy God ; let a time of trouble be a time of prayer, and when thou art afraid, trust in him ; imitate the resignation, submission, devotion, which is so admirably exemplified in this psalm ; beg the same spirit that, on this occasion, holy *David* had, and then come what will, thou art under a sure protection ; God will be thy dwelling-place, thy shield, thy all. In the 7th and 8th verses, he concludes with a prayer for further, and full deliverance, ascribing the glory of all victory, safety, and success, to God. Lord, form and impress my mind according to the doctrine, spirit, and scope of this psalm ; when in trouble, like *David*, may I believe, and pray like him, with the same fervour, and same success.*

Allow me to offer one instance more, in a very few words, of such exposition, and improvement, as may be imitated by very ordinary capacities : Suppose the 4th psalm fall in your course of reading ; you should first endeavour to learn the occasion of it, which is of greatest use towards understanding and improving the psalm ; and

then consider the subject-matter of the psalm. Here, say you, I find the psalmist in trouble (it may be, on the account of *Absalom's* conspiracy against him), and therein making his application to God, pleading former experiences, and casting himself upon his mercy and goodness, v. 1. Then he admonisheth, and expostulateth with his enemies, signifying, that all their reproaches against, and contempt of his government and authority, would be in vain, since by the divine appointment he was advanced : Thence he proceeds to advise them calmly, to debate things with themselves ; to turn inwards, and talk with their own hearts, and examine their principles, motives, &c. and to return to their duty, v. 4, 5. In the mean time, however God should order these matters, with reference to the opposition of his enemies, his own deliverance, &c. in which he was, in a good measure, resigned, he most earnestly desires the favour of God, the comforts of his presence, signified, probably, by that phrase, *lift up the light of thy countenance upon us* (though not excluding any lower instances of God's favour in temporal deliverances) ; which being granted, he triumphs in it, as a matter of greater joy than all worldly prosperity can afford ; and accordingly, with an easy, undisturbed mind, leaves himself, and all events to God, in the midst of his dangers. And hence, O my soul, in all thy troubles, learn where to go for relief ; make God thy refuge, and then thou art safe ; learn to depend, and learn to plead, as *David* here doth : Lord, teach me this divine art ; and may I always be mindful of the admonition in the 4th verse, (necessary for others, as well as *David's* enemies), necessary to me at all times ; may I stand in awe of God,

and not sin : And as a means of my safety herein, may I often withdraw from the noise and hurry of this world, silently and secretly commune with my own heart, examining my undertakings and actions at the bar of my conscience : And, Lord, whatever I want, deny me not the great distinguishing blessing thy servant so much valued, *viz. the light of thy countenance* ; let *the many*, as many as will, pursue their idols, and rejoice in their increase of worldly goods ; let this be the one thing my soul desires.

And thus I have given some specimens, and examples of what I designed. If any think I have carried the matter too high for the generality of Christians, who cannot be supposed to have either ability or leisure for such performances in their daily retirements, I answer : It is fit the copy should have some perfection in it, which the learner may not be able immediately to come up to ; I do not expect every serious and devout person should enlarge upon each chapter he reads, as fully, and in the same method as in these specimens : Artificial logical divisions, close and pertinent reflections, are by no means necessary in the present case, when persons are expounding and speaking to themselves. Nor is it likely that any, even the most watchful Christians, should be able constantly, and every day, without intermission, to attend this work, and carry on this course of reading ; they may sometimes want leisure, sometimes a disposition both of body and mind : And this unavoidably. Let me add, there are many sincere Christians, from whom little of this nature can be expected at any time : Such as have not books, or can scarce read them ; that are of very low and mean understandings, that have little

invention, thought, memory, &c. so that I do not pretend to impose, so much as by advice, this as a duty *upon all*; much less as a constant uninterrupted duty, as if we could never retire, worship God, and read a chapter acceptably, unless we observed this method.

But that which I insist upon, and recommend, is, that they, who have a capacity for it, would more ordinarily endeavour thus to improve the scripture, in the course of their reading. I would first and chiefly recommend it to Christians of the higher rank; such as have good natural parts, and minds somewhat improved; that want (at least need want) neither books nor time. If such as these, wholly, or more usually neglect the duty, it is certainly their own fault; owing not to incapacity, but indisposition and disaffection: *They can plead no want, but that of a spirit of devotion.* And methinks it should be matter of uncomfortable reflection to themselves, to find an *acumen* and dexterity for every thing else; to be expert and ready in the affairs of the body, and concerns of the world, and at the same time to be impotent and stupid in the business of religion; *reprobate to every good work* of this kind. O! that Christians would consider where their greatest wisdom and excellency lies; in what their truest interest consists. If you have more time, books, parts, greater capacity and advantages than others, you make but a sorry use, and will give but a mean account of them at last, if they terminate wholly in this life, and are not employed in the service of your souls and religion. You should endeavour to improve the advantages, which by a kind Providence you are favoured with: You have more leisure, a better education, greater capa-

cities than some others ; but what will all this signify, unless you worship more and better than others ?

I only add, that, notwithstanding the concessions I have made, I cannot question but the main body of real Christians, though of lower and but common abilities, may, with success and comfort, if they in earnest set about it, discharge this duty, and improve their Bibles, as I am now advising. The knowledge they have of the principles of religion, the help of a stated ministry, of a commentator (which many at least may procure), I may add, the help of God's Spirit (which will not be denied to those that sincerely ask it) will enable them to perform, in some good measure, what I am exhorting to : And therefore as I have recommended it to the serious Christian, I would leave it upon his conscience, earnestly requesting of him, that if he be convinced of the usefulness and excellency of the method proposed, he would not neglect it ; not only read the scripture daily but ordinarily, at least sometimes ; endeavour to expound and apply what you read. If hitherto you have been strangers to this work, be no longer so ; make a serious trial, and be not discouraged, though you meet with difficulties in your first essays : do your best, and God will assist and accept you ; *to him that hath* (and useth what he hath) *shall be given.* The bare reading of the scripture, (without understanding, reflection, &c.) has no religion, nor devotion in it at all : You should endeavour to apprehend what God speaks in the scripture, and what he speaks to you in particular, which should be followed with a suitable affectionate application ; and this is all I am here pleading for.

SECT. III.

The Heart impressed by the Scriptures.

FIFTHLY, endeavour to get the heart impressed by the scriptures, and formed according to the tenor and purport thereof: The word of God should *dwell in us*, Coloss. iii. 16. The rules, doctrines, laws, and very spirit of the Bible, should be transcribed into our souls; so that it may become νόμος ἑμψυχος, a law *within*, inwrought, as it were, into the frame and constitution of the mind. Thus it was with the believing *Romans*, as the apostle intimates, Rom. vi. 17. *Ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered you, or into which* <sup>εἰς ὃν πα-
ρεδόθητε
τύπον δι-
δαχῆς.</sup> you are delivered; where the apostle compares the doctrine of the gospel to an exemplar, mould, or type * (τύπος) as in stamps, seals or signets; accordingly to be delivered into such a form or type, is to receive the impression of it, as the wax does that of the seal. Or if the metaphor be borrowed from the *goldsmiths*, the sense is the same; for as metals, when melted, and cast into a mould, receive the shape, form, and print thereof, so Christians are formed and imprinted, as I may say, by the scriptures; have the lively signatures thereof upon them; are framed in their desires, affections, &c. thereby; which is

* Doctrinam Christi emphaticè vocat τύπον, qui est exemplar accuratissimū, ad cuius formatū opus aliquod exigendum est, ut typus tabernaculi, Act. vii. 44. Steph. de Brais in loc.

a matter of so exceeding moment, that we find it mentioned as the distinguishing privilege of the new covenant, or gospel dispensation, *Jer. xxxi. 33. This shall be the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.*

This God has promised, and this he performs in some degree, at the first conversion, when the Christian receives the regenerating Spirit. *Ye are the epistle of Christ written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, 2 Cor. iii. 3.* The believer is then *born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. Begotten through the word, Jam. i. 18.* It is further and more perfectly done afterwards, in the use of proper means, God still writing his law *more and more* in the heart of the believer. The whole life of a Christian is a sort of sitting under the hand of the Holy Spirit (to make use of another metaphor), that he may, by new strokes, finish the divine image upon the soul, and represent it with greater beauty and exactness: And as you should, at other times, so especially when conversing with the word of God in your oratories, *place yourselves, as it were, under the hand of the Spirit, and under the hammer of the word, as the comparison is, Jer. xxiii. 29.* waiting for, and earnestly desiring further and deeper impressions thereby. As the word of God is the seed of which we are born, so it is the milk by which we grow, *1 Pet. ii. 2.* and we should desire it for this purpose, and accordingly receive it inwardly, and digest it. Christ sanctifieth and cleanseth the church by the word, and will continue to do so, until he hath made it glorious, and without spot, *Ephes. v. 26, 27.* O he

concerned to experience something of this in your own souls! (*viz.*) the sanctifying, transforming influences of the divine word, impressed by the Holy Spirit: Read with a view to this, yielding yourselves to the blessed word of God, as wax to the seal; often saying, Lord, break this rock of an hard heart by the hammer of thy word; take away the heart of stone; cast me into the mould of thy gospel; and write thy law in the fleshly tables of the heart.

To explain my meaning more fully, and set a subject of so great consequence in as clear a light as I can, let me observe a few things. 1. That the holy scripture, or law of God, is a sort of a copy of God's nature, and an exemplar or pattern of ours; it shews what God is, and we should be. Is God holy, just, and good? So is his law, *Rom. vii. 12.* so is the Christian in his measure: Indeed the law of God contains the principles, disposition, and spirit of the church; there is no grace, excellency, or virtue in the whole body of the saints on earth, but the law of God exhibits it, as I may say, describes and demands it. 2. The law of God may then be said to be written upon our hearts (or we delivered into the mould or form of it) when we do in our most inward principles, disposition, and frame, as well as outward conduct, answer thereto; when the divine likeness, instamped upon the word, is by the word instamped upon our hearts; and our desires, inclinations, and affections, are regulated thereby. The word is the seal, our hearts are the wax; the impression received is the effect of the law, or the divine temper communicated: What is said of the promises, may be said of the other parts of scripture, *viz.* that by them we are *partakers of a divine nature*, 2

Pet. i. 4. The promises, I may add, the precepts, threatenings, all the rules and doctrines, and even histories of the word, are useful to beget and promote in us a divine nature ; and so far as they are written in the heart, or the heart is impressed by them, something of that nature is wrought in us : And this is what we should, all of us, endeavour for, as the fruit and effect of a devout conversation with the scripture. For further illustration,

3. Let me observe, that as the main scope of the Bible, and substance of religion, is contained in several general and comprehensive laws and maxims ; so it should be our great concern, in reading the *Bible*, to get the heart impressed and formed by these. To mention some of them ; as that, *Deut. vi. 5. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy might ?* which our Saviour calls *the first and great commandment*, *Matt. xxii. 37.* adding, as second to it, *v. 38. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Now these laws are as a seal, or mould, by which we are to be impressed, and into which we are to be cast ; and the effect of them, or impression received, is a frame and temper of spirit, and course of action agreeable thereto : As for instance, with reference to the first of these, *loving God with all the heart, &c.* the impression received is, *an acknowledgment of God, of his being and attributes ; an esteem of him as greatest and best ; an adherence to him as the supreme good ; an entire devotedness to his service, &c.* and with respect to the other, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, the impression received carries in it, *an acknowledgment of his rights, an equitable construction of his claims (putting ourselves in his stead), of his words, actions,*

The Bible

pleas, with a disposition always to do him justice, and, as we can, shew him mercy.

The same may be observed of those general maxims and laws of our Saviour, (the great foundations of all true religion) *One thing is needful*, Luke x. 42. *Seek first the kingdom of God*, Matt. vi. 33. *Labour not for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life*, John vi. 27. *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Matt. xvi. 26. These are the great laws of our religion: They direct us in our views, choice, and pursuits; representing eternal things in their reality and importance; teaching us a preference of them (an infinite preference, if I may so say) to the little things of this little world. *One thing is needful! What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Such a maxim impressed on the heart, presently throws the world under foot, and inscribes vanity upon its greatest glory! O, says the Christian thus impressed, that I may secure my eternal interest! *Lord, one thing have I desired of thee; thy loving-kindness is better than life; grant me thyself, and deny me all*: His mind is raised above time to eternity, and helped to look upon present and seen things with shyness and indifferency. *Deus meus et omnia*, My God, and my all, is his language: eternity is the mark at which he levels.

4. There is a variety of particular moral and divine laws scattered up and down the Bible, by which the heart of the Christian should be impressed; a few of which I shall mention, and reduce them to three heads, respecting God, our neighbour, ourselves. Such as respect God; as that we love him, *Psal. xxxi. 23.* that we fear

him, *Psal.* xxxvi. 4. that we trust in him, and commit all our affairs into his hand, *Psal.* xxxvii. 3. 5. *Prov.* iii. 6. that we own his providence as universal, supreme, *2 Chron.* xvi. 9. *Psal.* ciii. 19. that we worship him, and him alone, *Matt.* iv. 10. by prayer, thanksgiving, praise, &c. *Ephes.* vi. 18. *Philip.* vi. 6. that we keep his sabbaths, and reverence his sanctuary, *Lev.* xix. 30. that we chuse him, and rest in him as our only happiness, *Psal.* xvi. 5, 6.—lxxiii. 25. that we make his glory our end in all our actions, *1 Cor.* xix. 31. that we set him always before us, *Psal.* xvi. 8.

Precepts respecting our neighbour are, that we love him as ourselves, as before; that we *do justly, love mercy*, *Micah* vi. 8. *put on charity* towards him, *Col.* iii. 14. a glorious description of which we have, *1 Cor.* xiii. (Lord, cast us into that form, that mould) that all malice, bitterness, &c. be put away, *Ephes.* iv. 31, 32. that we continue to love him, pray for him, do him good, though an enemy, *Matt.* v. 44. that we *forgive one another, as God, for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*, *Ephes.* iv. ult. that we *be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*, *Rom.* xii. 21. To which may be added the whole class of relative laws or precepts, as I may call them, such as concern the duties of magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, &c.

Laws and precepts concerning ourselves (or self-government) are, that we may *live soberly*, *Tit.* ii. 12. that we be *poor in spirit*, *Matt.* v. 3. that we be *meek and lowly*, *Matt.* xi. 29. *humble*, *1 Pet.* v. 5. *careful for nothing*, *Phil.* iv. 6. *content with our condition*, *Heb.* xiii. 5. that we be

chaste, 1 *Thess.* iv. 4. *temperate in all things*, 1 *Cor.* ix. 25. that we *deny ourselves*, *Matt.* xvi. 24. *mortify the flesh*, *Rom.* viii. 13. *be spiritually minded*, *Rom.* viii. 6. *watch and keep your garments*, *Rev.* xvi. 15. that we *redeem* and improve our *time*, *Eph.* v. 16.

Now, by these and such like laws and precepts, our hearts and spirits should be formed ; and we should converse with our Bibles with an eye hereto ; endeavouring to get these, and all the rest of the divine laws written on the heart, so as that there may be produced a disposition and temper, that in some measure answers them. For instance, to give a specimen or two of what I mean : As to that precept, *Psal.* xxxiv. 9. *Fear the Lord, all ye his saints* : the correspondent or answerable impression is, *reverence of the great God, a sense of his authority over us, and presence with us at all times ; subjection of soul to him, care not to offend*, *Nehem.* v. 15. *ordering our thoughts, words, and actions as under his eye*. So as to that precept, 1 *Pet.* v. 5. *Be clothed with humility* ; the impression received imports, *just thoughts of our own littleness, guilt, and villainess ; a conviction that we deserve not the least of God's mercies ; a meek and quiet spirit under any disappointments, crosses, and sufferings, as seeing our own sin, and the hand of God therein, whoever be the instruments ; contentment with our portion and lot ; preferring others before ourselves, &c.* The like might be shewn with regard to that law (implied) 1 *Cor.* ix. 25. *temperate in all things* ; referring, I suppose, to the right moderating and governing the body, the bringing it into, and keeping it in subjection ; where the impression received must include, *a sense of the dignity and excellency of the soul above the body,*

and of the rational and divine life, above the animal life, or life of sense ; disposing to a constant care to restrain and moderate the appetites, passions, and affections, with reference to meat, drink, sleep, recreations, and all worldly enjoyments and bodily pleasures ; and this in subserviency to the interest of the soul, and advancement of the divine life. To give one instance more in that precept, Prov. iii. 6. Acknowledge God in all thy ways ; the impression hence received (or what is produced in us thereby) is, a belief of God's providence superintending, overruling, and ordering all things ; a conviction of our own insufficiency to direct and conduct ourselves, and give success to any of our undertakings ; a constant steady dependence on God for wisdom, support, and a blessing in what we do ; a referring all things to God ; a desire to know and comply with his will in every action ; submission to his will in all events.

These are some of the precepts that will frequently occur to you in reading the Bible ; and in such a way as I have here exemplified, should they impress the heart. O endeavour that they may do so : Remember God has promised it, as the special privilege of the New Testament church, that he *will write his law in their hearts*. Plead this promise, and wait for the accomplishment of it, particularly when solemnly reading the scriptures, in a way of worship : And when any thing offers, of more special concernment to you, look up to God ; beg a touch of the divine Spirit ; Lord, say you, write this law in my heart, and keep it upon the thoughts of the imagination of my heart for ever.

5. There are sundry evangelical laws and precepts, strictly and properly so, which we should endeavour to get our hearts impressed by ; as,

believing in Christ, *John* xiv. 1. praying in the name of Christ, *John* xvi. 26. doing all in his name, *Col.* iii. 17. depending upon his merit, grace, intercession, *2 Tim.* ii. 1. *Heb.* iv. 14. 16. looking for acceptance in him, and him alone, *Eph.* i. 6. not grieving nor *quenching the Spirit*, *Eph.* iv. 30. *1 Thess.* v. 19. The evangelical impression answering to such laws, is *a conviction that Jesus is the Messiah ; a persuasion of the necessity and usefulness of his office as mediator ; an apprehension of our own guilt, weakness, misery ; a consent to his government ; a relying on him in his whole office :* And, with reference to the Spirit, *accepting his help, cherishing his influences as a spirit of conviction, illumination, prayer, holiness, conduct, comfort and sealing, committing ourselves to him in all our work and walk.*

6. Let me add, that the great laws and rules of practical religion, contained in the *Bible*, are exemplified, many of them, in the lives of holy men there recorded ; where you may view them with advantage, and from whence you should endeavour to transcribe them into your own hearts and lives : they are exemplified most eminently in the life of the blessed Jesus. How constant his acknowledgment of God and providence, and dependence thereon ? *Psal.* xxii. 18, 19. *John* xii. 27. How prayer-full and devout was he ? *Matt.* xiv. 23. *Mark* i. 35. *Luke* vi. 12. How diligent and zealous in his work ? *John* iv. 32. 34. How faithful in his office ? *Heb.* ii. 17. *Rev.* i. 5. How submissive to the father's will ? *Luke* xxii. 42. How devoted to his name and honour ? *John* viii. 50.—xii. 27. 28. How compassionate, charitable and kind ? *Matt.* xv. 32. *Acts* x. 38. How forbearing towards his

enemies? 1 *Pet.* ii. 22. *Luke* xxiii. 34. and towards his friends? *Matt.* xxvi. 41. How sedate and composed in the midst of hurries, insults, and applauses? being never transported in an unseemly manner, but always having a full possession of himself, *Matt.* xii. 19.—xxi. 9. In a word, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, without sin, and without guile, *Heb.* vii. 26. 1 *Pet.* ii. 22.

And though there never was so bright an example, as that of Christ's; who was not only a perfect man, but more than a man; *God manifest in the flesh*: Yet we have other examples highly instructive, in which the word of life was held forth with some eminency; as, the example of *Moses*, the *Apostles*, *Prophets*, &c. How meek was *Moses*? How patient was *Job*? How devout was *David*? How zealous and heavenly-minded St. *Paul*? How manifestly did all of them (besides their more peculiar and appropriate excellencies) appear under the power and influence of the religion they professed? How evidently were such laws as I have mentioned, impressed on their hearts, and shewn in their conversations?

I might instance in the *Patriarchs*, *Moses* and others, in that catalogue of Saints we have in the 11th of *Hebrews*. *Moses*, when he came to years, in the strength and vigour of his age, bravely despised the preferments and glory of a court, preferring even persecution among God's people thereto; and all on that great principle, so much recommended by our Lord, *a belief and value of eternal things*; he had respect to the *recompence of reward*, *Heb.* xi. 24, 25. So those primitive confessors, *Heb.* x. 34. they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, know-

ing in themselves they had a better and more enduring substance. How brave a part did *Daniel* and the three children act in the Court of a Pagan Monarch? *We will not worship thy image, O King, say they; the God whom we serve is able to deliver us, &c.* It is plain the laws concerning fearing, trusting, worshipping their God, had taken deep hold of them; they feared not the wrath of the King, as is said of *Moses*, but endured, as seeing him that is invisible: And how much of Christ's law and gospel did that great Minister of it bear in his heart? the *Apostle Paul* I mean: I desire, says he, to know nothing but *Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. and again, *Acts xx. 24. None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear, so I may finish my course with joy.*

But I must not further pursue the argument, but refer the reader to the History of Scripture, where he will find himself *compassed about with a cloud of witnesses*, all bearing testimony to the truth and excellency of God's law, and acting under the authority and influence thereof, as those that had received it into their hearts, as a governing vital principle. Indeed their examples were not perfect; they had not fully transcribed the great rule, and therefore to be followed with caution and reserve: But so far as they had attained, and appeared to have copied out the divine law, we should copy after them: And it will be of considerable use to us, to view the transcript of the divine law in the lives of the Saints, though less perfect than the original itself. Look therefore to those holy men that have gone before you, and *look to Jesus the author and finisher of your faith*, desiring and endeavouring, that the same spirit may

be in you that was in them : Mind your pattern, the divine law, *chiefly and mostly* ; but you may sometimes also profitably mind those who were eminent proficient in it. But I must check myself: If I have drawn out the discourse too long on this and the foregoing head, and made them disproportionate to the rest, the importance of the matter must be my excuse. The law of God sanctifies and saves (as a means) not as written in the Bible with ink, but as written in the heart by the Spirit of the living God : In the one place it is a dead letter, in the other a vital principle ; and O that it may be thus written, more and more written in all our hearts.

SECT. IV.

Of practising and applying Scripture to ourselves : Of the Affections to be exercised in reading, &c.

SIXTHLY, Make a faithful application of what you read to your own souls, as there is occasion ; look into the perfect law of liberty, not as forgetful *hearers* or readers, *but doers of the word*, Jam. i. 22. Practice should be the end of all our reading ; the Scriptures were wrote that we *sin not*, 1 John ii. 1. and we should read them, that we might thence learn our duty, and be directed in the way of life. “ The “ Scripture will be read with the greatest profit, “ says *Erasmus*, if, when a man takes it into

“ his hand, it be with this mind, *ut scipso*
 “ *reddatur melior*, &c. that he may become a
 “ better man, and does not accommodate the
 “ Gospel to his own affections, but correct his
 “ own life, and all his desires, by the rule of
 “ it.” The Bible is a *doctrine according to God-*
liness, 1 Tim. vi. 3. It is *profitable for correc-*
tion, for instruction in righteousness, 2 Tim. iii.
 15, 16. But then you must use and apply it
 for this purpose; compare yourselves with it,
 and judge yourselves by it.

As for instance, when you find yourselves
 condemned by the word, *i. e.* that your temper,
 practice, conduct is contrary thereto, apply the
 censure, take the reproof to yourselves, and
 receive it for your correction and instruction;
 and if you note it down in your *Diary*, record-
 ing both the time, chapter, and verse, it may
 be an advantage to you. Suppose, for example,
 the section or portion of Scripture you read be,
Psal. xv. where you have the character of a
 good man, *viz.* That *he walketh uprightly,*
worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in
his heart; that he backbiteth not with his tongue,
 &c.—If you are conscious you want reproof or
 correction upon any of these heads, make the
 application with all faithfulness; and let there
 be a remark in your *Diary*, referring to this
 matter (if you see reason for it, as having been
 highly defective in these particulars) with the
 time when, and such reflections as you made
 upon it.

7. Read the Scripture with pure intentions,
 and minds free from prejudice, prepossession
 and bias, as far as possible; we are to *lay aside*
all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness (every
 passion, lust, corruption, every human regard

and worldly consideration) that we may *receive the ungrafted word*, *Jam. i. 21*. All rule, authority, and power, (to allude to that, *1 Cor. xv.*) must be put down, and every carnal thought brought in subjection to the word. We should always desire to know the truth, and be willing any thing should be true, that we find so, whatever interest or human authority it may contradict: We must not interpret Scripture by preconceived opinions, or any scheme of doctrines we have embraced, without sufficient examination, which we may call the *analogy of faith*. This may lead us off the only true foundation, and introduce a *Rabbi*, or master on earth, which our great Lord and Master in Heaven has cautioned us against. A Christian, *as such*, is subject to the only Lord that bought him; and we should often remember with what solemnity his authority was recommended to the Church, when he appeared on the mount of transfiguration, in his *Shechinah*, and a voice came from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him*, *Matt. xvii. 5*.

O endeavour to be steady and resolved in this great point: Let not * human authority or

* Disputing is not the business of this practical discourse, or it would be easy to produce numerous testimonies, both ancient and modern, for the authority of scripture as *our only rule*; notwithstanding it is with so much difficulty we admit it as such, when brought to the trial. I shall, however, insert a few passages to this purpose from some of the early writers of the Church, whose sentiments, on other occasions, are wont to carry considerable weight. “ Is it not absurd, Hom. 13. on 2 Cor. “ says *Chrysostom*, that, having to deal in money-matters, vii. “ men will not trust to others, but the counters are brought “ out, and they cast up the sum; but in the matters of their “ souls, are led and drawn aside by the opinions of other

worldly views, make comments on the Bible for you ; chuse your religion, form your articles of faith, or modify your profession : *How can you believe, (saith Christ) which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ?* John v. 44. We should read the Bible with the same temper the Apostle, when struck to the ground by the light of heaven, put that question, *Acts ix. 6. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?* Too many are resolved what to believe, and what to do, before they consult their master, or examine their rule, and therefore either neglect the Bible, hating the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd ; like the *Florentine* physician, that could not be

“ men, and this when they have an exact scale (wherein to
 “ weigh all things), and an exact rule or square (whereby to
 “ measure them) the dictate of the divine laws ? Therefore, Vid. Dr.
 “ I beseech and entreat you all, that not minding *what such* Patrick's
 “ or such a man saith about these things, you would consult Search
 “ the holy scriptures concerning them.” To the same purpose the Scr.
 the Emperor *Constantine*, in his speech in the council of p. 60.
Nice, *Ευαγγελικαὶ βίβλοι καὶ Ἀποστολικά καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν προ-* Theodor.
φητῶν τὰ θεοπίσματα, &c. “ The books of the Evangelists Hist.
 “ and Apostles, and the prophetic oracles, plainly inform us Eccl. lib.
 “ what opinions and sentiments to entertain concerning God ; 1. c. 6.
 “ wherefore all unfriendly contention being laid aside, let us
 “ proceed to debate and prove the things in question *from the*
 “ *sacred writings.*” And well had it been for the church,
 had that council, and all others succeeding, taken this advice,
 says another ; *μὴ μολογισμὸς καὶ συλλογισμὸς ἀνθρώπων προσενέγκης,* Theodor.
 &c. “ Do not offer reasons and arguments *human*, and that Dial. 1.
 “ are drawn from the authority of men ; I believe and obey
 “ *only the holy scripture.*” So *Basil.* “ Let the divinely in- Epist. 80.
 “ spired scripture determine the whole controversy among us.”
 And this is the language of all antiquity received with applause
 in protestant churches ; being indeed the very foundation on
 which they stand ; and yet how often forgotten upon oc-
 casion !

persuaded to look on the heavens through a telescope, lest it should make him stagger concerning *Aristotle's* principles, which, said he, I am resolved to maintain as long as I live : Or if they at all converse with their Bible, it is but in compliment ? and out of custom ; they do not pay a due subjection to it, as the only rule of their faith and practice, but wrest it in favour of their prejudices, honour, interests, and lusts ; they read it with spectacles of coloured glass, which makes it appear just as they would have it, according to the *medium* through which they behold it. But this is not to receive the word, *as it is indeed the word of God*, nor will you have the comfort and advantage of the holy scripture, till you have learnt to treat it with more reverence, and every interest and affection be made to stoop to the authority of it.

8. Read with suitable affections : *An honest heart* is requisite, and partly implied in what was said before ; the seed of God's word must be received into *good ground*, Luke viii. 15. Humility and teachableness of mind is also requisite ; *unless you become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 3. Christ was anointed to preach glad tidings *to the meek*. They only will value the *Bible*, and learn of Christ, who are meek, and not puffed up with the conceit of their own wisdom and sufficiency, but are pliable and teachable. The law of God makes wise the *simple*, says the Psalmist, *Psal. xix. 7*. The word in the original literally signifies, one that is easily persuaded, and in this place may intend the *humble* ; such as are sensible of their own weakness and infirmity ; of their need of divine instruction, and readily embrace it. *Austin*.

(in his 56th Epistle) directing *Dioscorus* how to come to the knowledge of the truth, tells him, "There is no way to attain it, but what God, who knows our infirmity, has appointed; and that way is, *first* humility, *secondly* humility, *thirdly* humility; adding "Shouldst thou ask me never so often about the way, I could make no other answer: Not but that there are other precepts which concern religion; but, unless in all the good we do, humility go before it, attend it, and follow after it, *totum extorquet de manu superbia*, pride and vanity will ruin all. And therefore, as *Demosthenes*, being asked what was the chief precept of eloquence, answered, *pronunciation*; and what the next, answered, *pronunciation*; what the third, still answered, *pronunciation*: So should you ask me never so often concerning the great laws of the Christian religion, I have nothing to answer, but *humility, humility.*" O! endeavour for this *first*, *second*, this great and most important capital grace; particularly in reading the holy scriptures. *To this man will I look*, says God, *that is poor*, Isai. lxvi. 2. *receive with meekness the ingrafted word*, James i. 21. *with the lowly is wisdom*, Prov. xi. 2. The great things of the gospel are *hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes*, Matt. xi. 25.

Further, read with reverence, consider God speaks to you in his word; and therefore, to allude to that in *Exod. iii. 5*. *Put off your shoes, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground. All scripture is given by inspiration of God*; and when you read it, especially in a way of worship, you should carefully preserve an awe and reverence upon your minds. Consider, you are not

conversing with the word of God only, but with God in his word ; accordingly represent God to yourself, *set him before you*, and receive the instructions and admonitions that are here given ; form the purposes and resolutions that are proper on this occasion, *as in his presence*, and under his eye.

Further endeavour, that your affections may answer the particular subjects, which may occur in reading. When you are conversant with threatenings, with judgments, with the terrors of the Lord ; an holy fear and dread should possess your minds, especially if you find yourselves in any measure struck at therein. Good *Josiah* rent his clothes at reading the law, 2 *Kings* xxii. 11. *Noah* received the warning and threatening of an approaching deluge with fear, *Heb.* xi. 7. which put him upon preparing an ark for the saving of himself and his house ; and you know the *Prophet* gives this as the character of the most acceptable worshipper, that *he trembles at God's word*, *Isa.* lxvi. 2. When you are conversant with the glad tidings of the gospel, the promises of life and salvation by a redeemer ; love, joy, gratitude, praise, &c. are proper affections.

In short, the scripture contains subjects so important in themselves, and of such concernment to us, that it should not be read in a dull manner, and without some warmth of affection. As the disciples hearts burned within them whilst Christ opened the scriptures, so ours should glow and burn when we read them ; and indeed, herein, in part, consists the difference we should put between *divine* and *common* writings : We are to worship God by the exercise of devout affections, while we converse with his

word ; imitating what is said of venerable *Bede* (for nothing more venerable than this) *that he often shed tears when he read the holy scriptures.*

9. Make constant and present use of the scriptures you read : Do not only entertain your minds speculatively with the truths of them, but refer them to after use ; as in the devotion you may be now engaged in ; where the portion of scripture you have been upon, will ordinarily supply you with matter for meditation and prayer, as well as prepare the mind for it. Use it also in time of temptation, as Christ you know did, *Matt. iv. 10.* and in your common business and converse. As the word of Christ is *to dwell in you*, so it should accompany you wheresoever you go, and in whatever you are about, giving laws to your thoughts, words, and actions ; sanctifying your common employments, and conducting you in the management of them. Use it also for your refreshment, support and comfort throughout the day : *Bind the commandment continually*, says *Solomon*, *upon thine heart, and tie it about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee*, *Prov. vi. 21, 22.* You may often turn aside in the day, and review in your thoughts something of the last chapter or psalm you read in your oratory ; especially when any thing occurs in providence, that makes it more than ordinarily suitable to you : As the good man delights in the law of the Lord, so he meditates therein day and night, *Psal. i. 20.* And *David* tells you, that God's statutes were his songs in the house of his pilgrimage, *Psal. cxix. 54.* Songs with him by night, *Psal. xlii. 8.* You should read God's word for daily

service, and have frequent recourse to it, when alone, or in company, and at all times, as occasion requires.

10. Depend on God, and beg his Spirit for your assistance and help in all this work; I mean, to understand, apply, and improve his word, as you have been directed. How successful and devout a student was *David* in the holy scriptures? How great a proficient therein? He tells you he loved it, that it was his meditation all the day, and that hereby he was wiser than his enemies, than the ancients, than all his teachers, *Psal.* cxix. 97, 98, 99. And yet you often find him putting up his petitions for further light and instruction; as v. 18. *Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.* “ Here, as the excellent Mr. *How* remarks, he supposes many undiscovered wonders, which *more open eyes* might yet behold in that external revelation of God’s mind, which was then afforded (and which was wont in those days to go under the name of *his law*, though it contained histories, prophecies, and promises, as well as precepts) although he was no stranger to those records, nor little insighted into them, he yet apprehended a need of more light and better eyes; which he therefore desires.” And to the same purpose he prays, v. 27. *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.* And again, v. 33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes:* Requests he often repeats. Let us imitate this great and good man, and depend on God and his Spirit for light, instruction, and influence in reading his word: Not that we are to expect *a new light*, as that signifies a new revelation and rule, either distinct from, or sup-

*Delighting in
God. II.
p. 31.*

plemental to the scripture rule; nor are we to lay aside our reason and understanding, relying upon an immediate *afflatus* and inspiration in reading and interpreting scripture, which would be downright enthusiasm: Notwithstanding I doubt not we may, consistent with the greatest sobriety, expect and look for the Spirit's help in reading the Bible, and in order to a suitable improvement of it. The Spirit was promised to abide with the church for ever, *John* xiv. 16. as for other purposes, so for a *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*, *Eph.* i. 17. (*i. e.*) of internal revelation, opening the eyes of the understanding. Nor will you ever know the truths of Christ, and of the Bible, so as to feel the power, influence, and authority of them upon the heart and conscience, without *internal revelation*, and unless the Spirit open the eyes and heart.

There is indeed a knowledge of, and assent to divine truths (*i. e.* to the propositions contained in scripture), which a person may have without any special help of the Spirit, and is sometimes attained by men of parts and letters, though unsanctified, in a degree of eminency above what even true Christians, of lower capacities, can ordinarily attain. But this knowledge and assent is speculative, resteth in the head, and does not descend into the heart, transforming and changing that: And therefore such persons are said not to know, *Isa.* i. 3, 4. *Jer.* ix. 3. not to believe, *Num.* xiv. 11. *Psal.* cvi. 24. The knowledge and faith they have is ineffectual, a lifeless and dead thing, and in God's account a nullity. "That knowledge, apprehension, and faith," says the forementioned author, "which is the only product of the exter-

Ibid. 36.

“ nal revelation, even recommended by the
 “ most advantageous convincing circumstances,
 “ is too faint to command the soul. Who
 “ amongst all the people of the *Jews*, at mount
 “ *Horeb*, could have any doubt but the autho-
 “ rity, that avouched the law there given them,
 “ was divine? And yet how boldly do they
 “ rush into idolatry, against the express letter
 “ of that law, while the sound of that dreadful
 “ voice of words, which delivered it, could hard-
 “ ly, one would think, be well out of their ears;
 “ and though they could not doubt of God’s
 “ authority, yet, for all that, their frequent re-
 “ bellions are plainly resolved into their infideli-
 “ ty: *How long will this people provoke me;*
 “ *how long will it be ere they believe me?* Num.
 “ xiv. 11.” He adds, “ Whatever way a man
 “ comes to be certain of any thing, that hath a
 “ contrary tendency to the bent of his habitual-
 “ ly wicked heart, he needs more than the evi-
 “ dence of the truth of the thing to make it ef-
 “ ficaciously determine his will against his for-
 “ mer vicious course. In short,” says he, “ faith
 “ is a part of homage paid to the great God,
 “ which is to be estimated sincere, according as
 “ it answers the end for which the things to be
 “ believed were revealed: The end is not to be-
 “ get only the notion of those things, as truths
 “ that are to be lodged in the mind, and go no
 “ further; as if they were to be understood
 “ true, only that they might be so understood;
 “ but that the person might accordingly have
 “ his spirit formed, and might shape the course
 “ of his whole conversation. Therefore it is
 “ called the *obedience* of faith; and the same
 “ word which is wont to be rendered *unbelief*,
 “ signifies disobedience, obstinacy, unpersua-

“ dibility, being from a theme which signifies
 “ to *persuade*. So that then this homage is given
 “ to the eternal God, when his revelation is
 “ complied with, and submitted to, *according to*
 “ *the true intent and purpose* of it; which that
 “ it may be, requires that the Spirit urge the
 “ soul with his authority, and overpower it to
 “ an awful subjection thereto. It is necessary
 “ (by reason of the apostacy) that the enlighten-
 “ ing communication, which he transmits into
 “ the soul, be not only so clear, as to scatter
 “ the darkness that clouded the mind; but so
 “ *penetrating*, as to strike and pierce the heart,
 “ and render it capable of a new form and
 “ frame: In order whereto, God, that at *first*
 “ *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, is
 “ said to have *shined into the hearts* (*viz.* of them
 “ whom he renews) *to give the light of the know-*
 “ *ledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus*
 “ *Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6.”

He shines on the heart, enlightens the mind at
 the first conversion; and further shines upon it
 afterwards by his Spirit: He *hath given us an*
understanding, says the apostle, *that we may*
know him who is true, 1 John v. 20. He not only
 gives us a revelation of him, but *an under-*
standing to know him: And this is what I am
 now advising you to seek and wait for; (*viz.*)
 the special illumination, help, and influence of
 the Spirit. I cannot doubt but it belongs to the
 stated office of the *Paraclete*, to assist the mem-
 bers of the church, in reading and interpreting
 the Christian revelation, and improving the Bi-
 ble, and you should depend on him for this pur-
 pose. Beg his presence and influence when you
 are going to read his word, and intermix fre-
 quent ejaculations with your reading. *Lord,*

say you, *teach me to profit, seal instruction ; write thy laws in my heart by thy Spirit, cause thy word to dwell richly in me, &c.*

If there be any, to whom such a strain of discourse is not grateful, I shall leave them to their own apprehensions ; only desire their dissent may be with more modesty than is usual ; and that they would not take upon them to prescribe to, or censure others with the air of dictators. In the mean time, as I look upon this doctrine to be of the utmost importance, so I think it my duty to assert it, and plead for it on all occasions. Take away the influences of the Holy Spirit from the members of the church, and the Christian religion, the gospel of Christ, will remain little else than a sublime speculation, a system of refined morals, as ineffectual to change hearts, and reform the world, as the heathen philosophy. The Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*, is the *Shechinah*, as I may say, the glory of the New Testament church : Learn to depend on him, on his influence and grace in the whole of his Office ; and let me add, the more entire and close your dependence is, the better you are like to succeed in your profession of religion, and particularly in a devout conversation with the Bible.

SECT. V.

Containing Two Arguments for the reading and improving the Holy Scriptures in the Manner prescribed ; (viz.) The Command of God, and Practice of the Church.

HAVING shewn you in what method, and with what affection you are to converse with your Bible in your retirement, and how to make the reading of the scripture a profitable part of divine worship (in which I have said the more, because several things have occurred a little out of the way, even of the more serious Christian's devotion, that are not sufficiently understood, and yet I apprehend of the greatest consequence), I shall now, in the second place, offer some considerations to enforce this duty upon you, (*viz.*) The diligent and devout reading of the Bible in your oratories. And,

1. Consider, for this purpose, the *command of God*. It was required of the *king of Israel*, that *he should write him a copy of the law in a book ; that it should be with him, and that he should read therein all the days of his life*, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. And the reason upon which he was to do this, extends the duty further, and lays the obligation upon all, *viz. that he may learn to fear the Lord his God*. All are concerned to fear the Lord, and therefore are to read his word, which teaches his fear. And it is observable, that as he was to read in the law, all the days of his life, so he is enjoined to *write him a copy of it ; which the Jews say, was to be done with his own hand, as*

a means to fix it the more in his mind. Some of the *Rabbies* add, that every private man was bound to write himself a copy of the law; and if the *king* had done it whilst a private person, he was obliged to do it over again, when he came to the throne. The same charge is given, *Joshua* i. 8. *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe according to all that is written therein.* Nor were rulers only, but the whole body of the people obliged to read and study the law: How express that injunction to the whole *Israelitish* nation, *Deut.* vi. 6, 7! *And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, &c.* They were to read the words of the law, learn and digest them themselves, and teach them to others. It follows, v. 8, 9. *And thou shalt bind them for a * sign upon*

* Whether this precept is literally, or figuratively to be understood, has been disputed among learned men. The *Jews* take it literally, and hereon ground their doctrine and practice concerning their *Phylacteries*, &c. with all the superstitions referring thereto. Some Christian divines also contend for the literal sense: Dr. *Wotton* particularly, in his discourse of the authority and usefulness of the *Misnah*; where he endeavours to prove, that the daily recital of the *Schemá* (as the *Jews* call it, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*) the use of *Phylacteries*, and schedules upon gates and door-posts, were required of the *Jews* in the law of *Moses*, and were no invention of their own. Of the same opinion is *Surenhusius*, who has, with great labour, collected the *Jewish Misnah*, and given an entire translation of it in five volumes in folio. The form and manner of these *Phylacteries*, and of what passages of scripture they consisted, he gives a particular account of, Part I, p. 9, but the whole savours so much of

thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates, (i. e.) be familiarly conversant with them, lay them up in the heart and soul, as in a parallel place, Deut. xi. 18. hold them before the eyes, and imprint them in thy memory, so as never to forget them.

In the New Testament the command is frequent: *Search the scriptures*, says our Saviour, *John v. 39. They have Moses and the prophets*, says *Abraham* in the parable of the rich man (requesting a messenger might be sent from the dead to warn his brethren) *let them hear them*, *Luke xvi. 26. (i. e.) let them consult their writings* (for *Moses* and the prophets were dead long since); let them read the written word, and learn the doctrine of salvation from thence. And we find the apostle recommending the scriptures to the *Ephesians*, as a most useful piece of armour: *Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, *Eph. vi. 17. To the same purpose, Coloss. iii. 16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; ἐνοικείτω*: Let it be an inhabitant in the soul; not only stand in the Bible, but dwell in the heart, and

Rabbinical whim, and makes them look so much like *Amulets*, that methinks it is not easy to believe they owe their original to the divine appointment (especially in that form of them). But the most, I think, of Christian writers, incline to the figurative and metaphorical sense, which is sufficient to my purpose; as importing the obligation the *Jews* were hereby laid under to a careful perusal and study of their law. *Dr. Patrick* takes it to be a proverbial speech; *Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, (i. e.) carefully remember them*: He observes, that just thus *God* commands them to preserve the memory of their deliverance out of the land of *Egypt*, and almost in the same words, *Exod. xiii. 9. 16.*

that copiously, and in great abundance. Now consider these precepts, either as the injunctions of a sovereign, or the advice of a friend, they ought not to be neglected : It is enough that so wise and kind a Being (one that knows and loves us better than we do ourselves) recommends to us the diligent study of his word : We may conclude from hence it is our interest. But he has right to prescribe to us ; his will signified makes our duty, nor may we dispute his authority, though we knew not its tendency to promote our happiness.

2. As this is God's command, so it has been the practice of the church, both Jewish and Christian, in all ages : Good and devout men have ever had a veneration for the holy scriptures ; *I have esteemed the words of thy mouth,* says *Job*, *more than my necessary food*, chap. *xxiii.* 12. Such was his value for a revelation from heaven ! And yet how little was he favoured with, compared with our Bible ! He lived in the patriarchal age, and probably had no system of written laws ; knew nothing of *Moses* and the prophets ; had only (beside the law natural, written in the heart) the benefit of some traditions from *Adam*, *Noah*, and others ; and occasional revelations by dreams, visions, &c. But he found the necessity and comfort of instruction from above, and therefore most affectionately embraces even the obscurer hints and intimations that were afforded him.

It was the special advantage of the *Jews*, that *to them were committed the oracles of God* ; and how they prized and used them, we need not be ignorant. *David* makes it the character of the blessed and pious man, *that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and that therein he meditates day*

and night, Psal. i. 2. And how much there was of this in his own temper, he himself informs us. *The statutes of the Lord, says he, are right, rejoicing the heart; more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb, Psal. xix. 8. 10. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches, Psal. cxix. 14. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath to thy judgments at all times; thy testimonies are also my delight, and my counsellors, v. 20. 24. and v. 97. O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. And again, v. 103. How sweet are thy words to my taste; yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. And in the same strain he goes on through the psalm, which is mostly employed upon the subject, displaying the excellency of God's word, and his own delight therein.*

Nor was this the temper of their more eminent saints, but reckoned, in a great measure, *essential to the religion of a Jew*; insomuch that their children were trained up in the reading and study of the law from their very infancy. As soon as they can speak, says *Buxtorf*, the *Jewish* children are taught to write some sentences of scripture: And one of their own authors, mentioned by *Wagenseil*, tells us, they begin with that text, Deut. xxxiii. 4. *Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.* This every father was bound to teach his son, as soon as he could speak; designing hereby, it is likely, to instil a veneration for the law among their first notions: The law is our inheritance, not the world? not *Canaan*! So that it was not altogether extraordinary, which we read of *Timothy*, that from a ^{2Tim.iii.} child he knew the holy scriptures; but a thing of ^{15.}

common attainment : And something of the like zeal for the scriptures continued among them after their greatest apostacies in other instances. “ Ask one of our nation,” saith *Josephus*, “ concerning the law, he will tell you all things more readily than his own name ; for learning them as soon as we come to have any knowledge of things, we preserve them deeply engraven on our minds.” To the like purpose is that of *Ribera*, who tells us, “ He was acquainted with a *Jew* at *Salamanca*, of whom he inquired about several things, both in the historical and prophetical books of scripture ; but,” says he, “ he stopped me immediately upon the first mention of them, and repeated them all himself without book in the *Hebrew* tongue ; which I relating to another *Jew*, that was become Christian, he told me it was no wonder, for they committed all these things to memory from their childhood.” Nay, so superstitious were they in this affair, that they placed a sort of religion in numbering the verses, words, and even letters of every book ; which was the province of the *Masorets*, whence they had the name of *Sopherim*, or numberers.

And how matters stood in the Christian church with reference hereto, history informs us : *Apollos* was mighty in the scriptures, Acts xviii. 24. The *Berceans* searched the scriptures daily, Acts xvii. 11. which, as it was a means of bringing them to embrace Christianity ; so, no question, it was their practice afterwards. The primitive confessors had that value for their Bible, that no terrors could prevail with them to part with it, and resign it to the fury of their enemies. They would give their bodies to be burned, rather than their sacred books, when

Patrick's
Search
the Scrip-
ture.

demanded of them by the heathen persecutors ; which was a trial we know they actually underwent : And those that complied in the hour of temptation, were called *traditores* (because they delivered up their Bibles), a name of the greatest infamy, and the crime thought so heinous, that the guilty could scarce ever after be restored to the peace of the church. And surely they who preserved their Bibles at so great a hazard, must have had a considerable value for them, and would not neglect them. It is said of *Tertullian*, that he was taken up night and day in reading the scriptures, that he got much of them by heart, and that so exactly, that he knew each period. *St. Austin* tells us, that, after his conversion, the scriptures were the matter of his most pure and chaste delight, in respect whereof all other books (even his once admired *Cicero*) became dry and unsavoury to him. *Theodosius* the younger could repeat any part of the Scriptures exactly ; and was wont to discourse out of them with the *bishops*, that were at court, as readily as if he had been an old bishop himself. *St. Jerom* says of *Origen*, that he never went to meals, without some part of scripture read ; never to sleep, till some about him had read them to him. *Eusebius* says, he heard one, who had his eyes burned out in the *Dioclesian* persecution, repeat *memoriter* the scriptures in a large assembly, as if he had been reading out of a book. *St. Jerom* tells us of *Vid. Nepotian*, that, by daily reading and meditation, he had made his soul a library of Christ : And should I descend to more modern instances, *Cave's Pr. Christian-ity, Pt. I. 468, &c.* how many might be found of the like temper ! *Zuinglius* wrote out *St. Paul's* epistles, and got them by heart. *Beza* could repeat them in

Greek, at fourscore years of age, having learned them in his youth. It is said of *Cranmer* and *Ridley* (those renowned martyrs), that they had got the New Testament by heart, the one in his journey to *Rome*, the other in the walks of *Pembroke Hall* in *Cambridge*.

And if these examples be thought extraordinary, I might produce a multitude of others more upon the common level, enforcing the same duty upon us. Some have read the Bible throughout above twenty times a year, some ten times, some five, some three. That ornament of his age and country, the Honourable Mr. *Robert Boyle*, after all the reputation he had got by his philosophic studies, and some composites of wit, professes the scriptures were his most honoured and beloved subject. “I would “bring myself,” says he, “to prefer the least “sprig of the tree of life to a whole wood of “bays; and am inclined to think, that a Christian “may find a higher satisfaction in persuading “men to pay praises to the scripture, than in “receiving them from all the world besides.” And so great was his value for scripture-knowledge, that he took all opportunities to enrich his mind with it. It is said of him, that if he met with any hints in conversation with his learned friends, which he thought a good illustration of a difficult text of scripture, he would request to have them in writing. And the like veneration for the sacred scriptures, the like esteem for them, and delight in them, has been found in hundreds and thousands more; indeed in all the true and genuine members of the church, according to the measure of their attainments.

Epist.
Dedic.
before
his Book
Of the
Style of
Script.

And how much of argument and motive is there in this consideration! We are, you see, compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, all bearing testimony to the dignity and value of the Bible, and to the pleasure and profit of conversing with it; and shall we not regard their testimony, and receive the instruction of it? The examples of good men, though not strictly a law, are a standing admonition to the church, and recorded for that purpose: *Take my brethren the prophets*, says the apostle, *for an example*, Jam. v. 10. *Be followers of them*, says another apostle, *who through faith and patience inherit the promises*, Heb. vi. 12. And again, 1 Cor. iv. 16. *I beseech you, be ye followers of me*. There is indeed a sort of an authority in eminent examples: “Will you mention to me,” says *Cicero*, “the *Scipio’s*, *Cato’s*, and *Laelius’s*,” “and say that they did this or that? though “the thing displeases me, yet I cannot withstand the authority of such men.” *Seneca* Epist. II. observes, that the followers of *Socrates* learned more from his manners, than his precepts: And behold, greater than *Socrates* or *Cato* are here. The Christian church has greater names, and brighter examples, than any among the Pagan moralists. O! let us pay a due respect to them; let me observe and imitate those that have gone before us in the way of life: Their practice, I grant, is not our rule; but when it agrees so well with the precept, it may and should enforce it upon us.

SECT. VI.

Other Arguments for reading the Scripture ; as, the Excellency, the great Usefulness of it : It is one Way of solemn Worship ; and a Means of delightful Intercourse with God, &c.

3. CONSIDER the excellency of scripture, and let this invite you to a diligent *perusal* of it. Particularly *it is the word of God : All scripture is given by inspiration of God*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Bible contains God's oracles, Rom. iii. 2. which character alone is sufficient to recommend it. Writings, among men, have their esteem and value, very much from the quality and station of their authors. A letter from a great person, how mean soever the subject be, is generally prized. A speech from an earthly sovereign commands the attention, even of a kingdom : And shall a book that has its * original from

* That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, is an article of religion so important in itself, and so necessary to be known and believed, that it ought carefully to be inquired into. Indeed some knowledge of this is presupposed to the method of conversing with the Bible, I am here advising to. Though the Bible be a book of great antiquity, and containing a variety of excellent learning ; yet was it not a revelation from God, in which we have a *special* concern, nothing could entitle it to so much of our time, thought, and study, as is, on that consideration, due to it. I would therefore earnestly recommend to the reader, that he endeavour, for a thorough conviction of this truth founded upon proper evidence. What that evidence is, I cannot pretend in

heaven, which claims God for its author, have no regard, or but little regard from us !

Further, the instruments employed in publishing and writing the scripture, put a value

this discourse to shew, but shall refer to such treatises as give it with greatest strength and clearness. It is certain, mankind, in their present fallen state, need a revelation from heaven, both concerning their duty and happiness. We have abundant reason to expect, that a merciful and good God would herein condescend to man's infirmity and necessity, and afford him a suitable revelation. The Bible not only pretends to be a revelation from God, but the greatest part of it has been received as such, by as wise and great men, as any in the world, and by large bodies of them for some thousands of years : many of whom have professed its doctrines, and embraced the religion it prescribes, at the hazard and expence of all that is dear to them ; have laid down their lives as a testimony to the truth of it. It is a revelation every way worthy of God ; has all the internal marks of divinity, that can be desired : It stands confirmed by a train of the most amazing miracles, the broad seal of heaven. The several parts of the Bible, as the writings of *Moses*, of the prophets, and of the evangelists, bear testimony to each other, and support one another's authority. It is not so precarious an argument of *Monsieur Du Bois de la Ceur*, as Divine it may seem. " If," says he, " there was such a man as *Mo-* original
" *ses*, and if he was the author of the books commonly attri- of five
" buted to him, then the *Jewish* religion is true, and the whole Books of
" Old Testament of divine original : If the *Jewish* religion be *Moses*,
" true, then Jesus Christ is the Messiah ; and if Christ be the p. 3.
" Messiah, all he taught and said is to be believed : Therefore
" the whole New Testament is true, and consequently the
" whole Bible a revelation from God." The writers of scripture mutually receive from, and give light and authority to one another.

I might subjoin, as a glorious confirmation of the truth and divinity of scripture (though this is not a place to enlarge upon that subject), that it has been fulfilled in the constant course of Providence from the beginning of the world to this day. There is an admirable harmony between the word and Providence ; so that the one seems to be nothing else but a regular acting over the other. The scripture is the plan or scheme, as I may say, of the divine government ; Providence

upon it : They were *holy men*, and *moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2. Pet. i. 21. It was not peculiar to *Isaiah*, that the Holy Ghost spake by him (he spake also by the rest of the prophets), *Acts*

is the counterpart thereof. For instance, the scripture has said, that there should be a regular succession of night and day, of winter and summer, of seed-time and harvest; that the earth should be drowned no more; and as a pledge of God's veracity, his bow should appear in the clouds: All which we see accomplished. The scripture has told us what should be the general state of the world, even to the end of time; has described events with great exactness; such as were wholly out of the reach and prospect of any finite understanding. It foretells, that the posterity of *Abraham* (the children of *Israel*) should go down into *Egypt*, and sojourn there, in a state of slavery and affliction, for four hundred years, and then be delivered; which was accomplished to a day. It describes, by way of prophecy, the settlement of *Israel* in the promised land; their prodigious increase, the condition of their several tribes, their several captivities, deliverances, revolutions, and changes; their general dispersion, as at this day: Of all which the 28th of *Deuteronomy* is a sort of an historical map, delineating and representing, in a lively manner, every event (as the reward of obedience, and punishment of disobedience), as if it had been wrote by some careful observers, in successive ages, after the things there mentioned came to pass. It describes the rise and fall of the four famous monarchies of the world, the *Assyrian*, *Medo-Persian*, *Grecian*, and *Roman*; and that in order, with their distinct periods: The greatest event of all, the incarnation of the Son of God, is described, in the several circumstances of it, in a manner that is truly surprising; as, that he should be born of a *virgin*, and is therefore called in the prediction *the seed of a woman*, Gen. iii. 15. which was fulfilled, in the very letter, some thousand years after, *Gal.* iv. 4. (could this be from an uninspired pen?) It describes the family he was to come of, the time of his coming, his life, offices, death, resurrection, ascension; the opposition he was to meet with; the success of his doctrine, and establishment of his church; the rise of antichrist, the progress of his kingdom, I may add, the fall and ruin thereof; the state of the church, and of religion in its last period; the resurrection of the body, the final judgment; most of which have been exactly accomplished ac-

xxviii. 25. and besides their inspiration, they have something in their personal character to recommend their writings. *Moses* God knew face to face; *David* was a man after God's own heart; *Solomon* the wisest of men; *Daniel* a person highly beloved; *John* the favourite disciple of Christ; and the apostle *Paul*, who wrote so great a part of the New Testament, was caught up into the third heavens. These

according to the scripture plan, and the rest we wait for, and have here insured.

As to particular persons, the scripture anatomises the very heart, discovers inward corruption in all its workings; the general method of God's intercourse with believers, enlightening, convincing, comforting, &c. It relates their several temptations, fears, dangers, with the way and means of their deliverance and safety; their spiritual maladies and distempers, with their cause and cure; the comfort and peace that is to be found in the way of religion, and that followeth obedience; the distress, terror, weakness, &c. that is the fruit of apostacy: In short, the main passages of the Christian warfare, all the varieties of his case and experience, are represented in the scripture. So that Providence is really a transcript of the Bible. What was said of the church, that it is *Christus explicatus*, Christ unfolded, may be said of Providence, that it is *Biblia explicata*, the Bible displayed, the several scenes there laid down regularly acted: So that I think I need not scruple to call this a demonstration, as strong and sensible, as a subject of this nature is capable of, *that he who governs the world indited the word.*

The reader will excuse this digression, which I thought not impertinent to my present purpose: The more we are established in this great truth (that the Bible is the word of God), the better Christians we are like to be, and the better we shall esteem and improve the Bible; and I cannot but recommend it, as a matter of the last importance to the reader, that he would endeavour to build hereon a firm foundation, and not take it (the divinity of the Bible) for granted as a tradition received from his fathers, and a truth generally admitted in the country where he lives: Such a faith, in other places, would dispose to embrace the *Trent* Creed, or *Alcoran*, instead of the Bible.

and such like were the penmen of scripture; which methinks should raise our esteem of it. What veneration do we often pay to ancient writings, that come to us under the names and authority of great men, and saints (as we affect to call them), though but weak and fallible men at best, and have, it may be, little but their antiquity to recommend them! But here are *saints*, undoubted saints, great and *inspired* saints; and shall we not treat their writings with a suitable regard?

I might add, under this head, that there is an honour put upon scripture from the interest the Son of God had in the publication of it. *God has in these last days spoken to us by his Son*, Heb. i. 2. What immediate concern he had in promulgating the Old Testament laws, I shall not now inquire; but the New Testament is properly the doctrine and law of Christ; *it was begun to be spoke by the Lord himself*, Heb. ii. 3. was confirmed and further enlarged by such as he commissioned and inspired; so that the whole is the *word of Christ*, Col. iii. 16. And shall we not value and study a book that comes originally from God, and is in a great measure published by the Son of God incarnate? *O see that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven.*

Nor is it the least argument of the scripture's excellency, *that it is true*, infallibly true; which gives it a preference to all human writings. *I will shew thee*, says the angel to *Daniel*, *that which is noted in the scripture of truth*, Dan. x. 21. Its predictions and prophecies are true, *Luke* xxiv. 44, 45, 46. Its promises are true, *2 Cor.* i. 20. and (which I would more particularly here take notice of) its relations or histories are true, and have an exactness in them above what common

writings can pretend to. It describes not only the actions of men, but the principles from whence they flow. It gives an account of *Abel's* faith, and *Cain's* want of faith in their offerings; of *Noah's* religious fear, when he prepared the ark; of *Moses's* unbelief and passion, when he smote the rock; of the envy of *Joseph's* brethren; of *Pharaoh's* hardness of heart; of *Sarah's* infidelity; of *Esau's* inward profane temper; of *David's* pride, when he numbered the people, &c. And how valuable is the scripture on this account! (besides the evidence we have from hence of its divinity). There never was, and never will be, any true and *complete history*, either of *England*, or any other nation; or indeed, of any great event, unless an inspired pen be employed in it. Other histories (supposing the writer never so honest and impartial, according to his light) can only give us the fact in gross, *the outward action*, but cannot lay open the secret springs, nor disclose the inward passions, that gave rise to all, and intermixed with all. The actions of men ordinarily follow their purposes and resolutions, and these very much follow the affections and passions; which, how they are struck and moved, is often a secret to the world, notwithstanding the greatest events depend thereon: But these are, in many instances, clearly displayed in the sacred history; whereby the reader receives another sort of instruction and admonition than he can have from other writings. It is the glory of scripture, that it is *the word of truth*, Jam. i. 18. on which consideration we should value it the more, read and study it with more care, diligence, and affection.

Further, the scripture contains the most excellent subjects; the matter of it is of the great-

est importance ; as, its account of the creation of the world, and original of all things ; in which it gives more satisfaction, in a short chapter or two, than all the heathen philosophers have done in their numerous writings ; many of whom are so far from telling us *how* the world was made, that they believe it was *never made*, but was eternal. So its account of man's apostacy, and the origin of evil (that puzzling question in the Pagan divinity) ; its account of a future state, the certainty of another world, the chief good and final happiness of man ; the immortality of the soul, the nature of its happiness in the separate state ; these are doctrines of the utmost concernment to religion, the very basis and foundation thereof, and all of them *clearly* discovered, and fully established in the Bible, *and there only*.

The philosophers indeed dispute now and then about such subjects, but are sadly bewildered in their thoughts, and cannot come to any certainty in them. The famous *Socrates*, it is known, was in suspense concerning the future existence of the soul ; and the great *Cicero* speaks backward and forward, and, in general, expresses himself rather like one that *hoped and desired the soul might* be immortal, than one *convinced* it was so. But the holy scripture sets us above all rational doubt on these heads : There *life and immortality is brought to light. In my Father's house*, says Christ, *are many mansions*, John xiv. 2. And again, *Luke xx. 36.* speaking of the children of the resurrection, *Neither can they die* (saith he) *any more, for they are equal to the angels* : A testimony of more weight and force, than all the fine sayings of the moralists put together.

And how admirable an account does it give of the blessed God himself! Of his nature, attributes, perfections; of the several parts, and the manner of his worship: How pure a system of divine morality does it furnish us with! directing us in every duty and office of life; in every relation and circumstance, taking us by the hand, as it were, and leading us step by step in the way to happiness; exciting our fears by its terrors, our hopes by its promises, not only of future glory, at the end of our work, but by promises of inward assistance, whilst in our work.

I might add as another most important subject peculiar to the scripture, (*vis.*) the doctrine of the Mediator: *here*, and *here only*, we have an account of the great *Immanuel*; of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension; of his offices; of his Spirit; the end of his sufferings; the atonement made thereby; and of the special privileges the church enjoys by his means: Such as justification, adoption, and sanctification, &c. The two great articles of all religion, pardon of sin, and the hopes of heaven, are so entirely founded on scripture revelation, that, where that is wanting, there is, there can be no sufficient certainty of either. Here we are informed, that *God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*, 2 Cor. v. 19. And here we are assured of a recompence at the resurrection of the just; points which no book in the world can give full satisfaction in, that does not derive from the Bible. Indeed the light of nature may help us to infer, or rather conjecture, that God will reward good men; that their honesty, sobriety, beneficence, and charity, shall not be over-

looked : But that apostate creatures, conscious to themselves of so much guilt, should expect *an eternal reward* ; that all their iniquities should be pardoned, and that God should bestow upon them a crown of life, an *exceeding eternal weight of glory*, the knowledge of this is wholly owing to the Bible. Whatever excellency may be supposed in the virtues some value themselves upon, they are far from meriting heaven ; nor can any principle of natural light assure them of heaven as the reward thereof. For ought they know, or can know, all their little imperfect services are repaid, and more than repaid, by the bounty of common providence, in the present life. So that it is from *the Bible only* that the great doctrines and subjects of religion can be learnt. Th's gives the only account of some, and the clearest account of all of them. And shall we neglect a book that is thus excellent, and thus instructive ?

4. Consider the great usefulness of the holy scripture to all the purposes of the Christian's life, and in all the variety of his case and circumstances : It is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, &c.* 2 Tim. iii. 16. It is a complete rule of faith, a perfect directory for practice : *Ye err, not knowing the scriptures,* Matt. xxii. 29. It is *a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path,* Psal. cxix. 105. It is a preservative in time of temptation, *Eph. vi. 17. Matt. iv. 7.* And against sin, *Psal. cxix. 11. I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.* Hereby is the Christian warned, *Psal. xix. 11.* and cautioned, *Psal. xvii. 4. By the word of thy lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer.* Treasure up the word of God in your minds, hide it in your hearts,

and you will not so easily yield in time of temptation, whilst the authority of the divine law stares you in the face, and, like a drawn sword, stands before your eyes.

And then how great the support the serious Christian derives from hence in time of adversity? *Unless thy law had been my delight*, saith David, *I had perished in my affliction*, Psal. cxix. 92. It affords you examples of suffering saints, highly instructive; it tells you of their faith, patience, resignation, and composure in the sharpest trials and conflicts; it sets before you great and precious promises, 2 *Pet.* i. 5. exactly suited, one or other of them, to your case, whatever it be: It acquaints you with the reason, design, and tendency of your troublesome exercises; that it is only, *if need be*, that you are in heaviness for a season; that though your afflictions be not joyous, but grievous, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness; that all *shall work for good*, and work for you *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. This, and a great deal more, the scripture will inform you of, relating to your afflictions. You here read of *the patience of Job*, and *see the end of the Lord*, Jam. v. 11. and from all may collect matter of the highest support and consolation in all your troubles.

I might subjoin, that the holy scripture, and delight therein, is the great means of the Christian's fruitfulness, as the psalmist intimates, *Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord*.—*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth his fruit in season*, Psal. i. 1, 2, 3. What a brook, or canal of water is to a tree planted on its banks, that is the law of God to the believer; he de-

rives refreshing streams from thence: *I will never forget thy precept*, (saith that devout man) *for with them thou hast quickened me*, Psal. cxix. 93.

Once more, let it be considered, that the holy scripture is the vehicle, as I may call it, of the Spirit; it not only reveals, but gives the Spirit, *i. e.* is one means by which it is given, at first given, *Gal. iii. 2. Ye received the Spirit by the hearing of faith* (or by the gospel); and given in greater measures. The Spirit accompanies the word, and affords conviction, light, and influence, and further measures thereof to the believer, whilst he is seriously conversant therewith. Not but that a man may find himself instructed and admonished in reading *Seneca*, *Antonine*, *Epictetus*, *Plutarch*, and others of the more refined moralists; but as the *Bible* carries divine morality higher (without any of the *errata* and alloys that are mixed with their rules) so there is a divine energy and power attending the study of it, which is peculiar to itself: And indeed this is one of the chief glories of our Bible. I grant, that if we only consider it as an external revelation, it exceeds all other writings in the world: But here is its great distinction; in this consists an eminent part of its usefulness and comfort, *that it is the word and doctrine of the Spirit*; which the Spirit eminently owns by his gracious communications; gradually enlightening, purifying, transforming the Christian; impressing the mind, writing the law in the heart, and changing him into the divine image *from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Well, these and such like are the purposes the scriptures serve for; these are among the advantages you may reap by a diligent and devout

conversation with them. O! be not such enemies to yourselves, as to cast by this sacred book. Let not the dust on your Bibles witness to your neglect and contempt of them.

There are many high encomiums the ancient writers of the church have bestowed upon the holy scriptures: *Chrysostom* calls them the medicine of the soul (*της ψυχης φάρμακα*) a repository of spiritual remedies, the Christian's consolation in all his troubles, his armour, his weapons; adding, "what food is to the body, that the "reading of the scripture is to the soul: It is "spiritual nourishment, and renders the soul "stronger, more constant and philosophical; "not suffering it to be carried away with absurd "imagination, but making it pure and light- "some, gives it wings to carry it up to "heaven"—and elsewhere, "great is the good "of skill in the divine writings; this makes a "philosophical soul; this forms a man to be "acceptable; this makes him mind not things "present, but to fix his thoughts on the other "world and life." And in one of his sermons on *Matt.* he calls it "a quiet haven, an im- "pregnable wall, a tower that cannot be shaken; "an armour strong and untouched, glory that "cannot be lost, continual joy and delight." He adds, "Whatever can be thought of, "amiable, and any way good, commerce with "the holy scriptures will afford all that." *Isidore* calls it, scales by which we may ascend to God. *Prolegom. in Psal.* *Austin* calls it a fountain of salvation from whence we fetch remedies against our passions, and expressing his preference of it to all other writings, says, *Auferantur de medio chartæ nostræ, &c.* "Take away our books, let the "book of God be brought forth, hear Christ, *Enarat. in Psal. lvii.*

“hear the truth speaking.” And a multitude of passages in the same strain might be recited ; but it is needless after what has been said : And indeed the Apostle comprehends all in these words, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. 17. *That the holy scriptures are able to make wise to salvation, to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.* O Christians ! attend your duty and interest : *Blessed are they that delight in God’s law,* *Psal.* i. 2. *Blessed is he that readeth the words of this prophecy,* *Revel.* i. 3.

5. Let me offer another argument (*viz.*) That the reading and conversing with the holy scriptures in the manner prescribed, is a part of worship that we owe to God, and a means of special delightful converse with him. Hereby we pay an homage to the blessed God, own his authority, his right to give laws, and our subjection to him. When you take the Bible into your hands to read (with a temper that suits devotion) you do, as it were, say, *Lord, thou art our King, thou art our lawgiver ; these are thy edicts, thy commands, which I receive and embrace as the great standard of my religion, the rule of my thoughts, words and actions : I am now at thy foot to hear what God the Lord will speak :* And then as you expect internal teaching, heart-impressions (as you may and ought) in and by the reading of the word, there is an inward and most profound worship offered to God therein. You acknowledge him sovereign of the heart, guide and director of the mind, perfectly acquainted with your frame, your thoughts, affections, &c. all which you subject to him, waiting for the healing, rectifying, sanctifying influences of his Spirit, by the word. And how acceptable a service must this be ?

How pleasing to God, as well as profitable to yourselves?

And it is a means (as I hinted) of the most grateful intercourse with God: This many devout Christians have experienced; their hearts have sometimes burned within them, while they have been searching the scriptures, reflecting, meditating on them, and improving them (in the way mentioned.) Here God and the soul speak together; God speaks in the word, and the soul, in the exercise of suitable graces, speaks to God; as, faith, sorrow, resentment, complaint against itself, desire, resignation, love, praise, gratitude, &c. And how delightful a work is this! It gives an heavenly tincture to the mind, excites spiritual passions, and spreads a divine solace and pleasure through the faculties. Try the method I am advising to, and you will find it so; no doubt, the exceeding satisfaction and entertainment the *psalmist* met with in God's statutes, were, *in part*, owing to this. They are truly excellent, I grant, and delectable, as they contain an history of past things, predictions and promises of future things, and as they are a perfect rule of holy living. But the sweetness and solace he found in them, did, I presume, result, in some measure, from the intercourse and communion he had with God by means thereof. Hence they were his *songs in the house of his pilgrimage*; his *heritage for ever*; the *rejoicing of his heart*, Psal. cxix. 54. 111. *More to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter than the honey, or the honey-comb*, Psal. xix. 10. And could we converse with them with *David's* spirit and temper, we should ex-

perience the same in them he did. I will only add,

6. Which was touched before on another head, and for another purpose, that the Spirit of God lays so great stress upon this, *that he distinguishes men by their regard to, or neglect of the scriptures.* Hence he fetches his characteristics of good and bad men. How plainly is this implied in the first psalm? *Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, &c. but his delight is in the law of the Lord, &c.* ver. 1, 2. where he describes the pious, the godly, the blessed, by their delight in God's law; and adds v. 4. *The ungodly are not so:* (i. e.) they are not blessed as the godly are; nor do they delight in the divine law as the godly do. So that there are two sorts of persons distinguished by most essential characters; the one make the law of God their rule, their study, their counsel and delight; the other walk in counsels of their own, in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes; and as for God's judgments, *they are far above, out of their sight,* Psal. x. 5. They live without God and his law in the world. And can there be a greater argument to love and delight in the holy scriptures? It is, you see, the property and character of a saint, and the neglect of it the mark of a reprobate; those worthless creatures, that chaff the wind driveth away, and which shall be burned up with unquenchable fire!

And thus I have set before you several arguments to enforce the exhortation I have given to a serious devout converse with the word of God in your oratories. Do not despise what

has been said ; do not omit so great, so necessary and important a duty any longer. If hitherto you have neglected it, now address yourselves to it ; resolve henceforward to esteem and use your Bible more, and allow it a place in your constant daily secret worship. Say not this is the business of divines and recluses (persons sequestered from the world ;) it is the business of all Christians, of every one that has a due regard to the safety and prosperity of his immortal soul. *Let the word of God dwell richly in you*, saith the apostle, Col. iii. 16. which exhortation he directs to Christians in common. “ Harken to this (saith an eminent Father in a discourse upon the text) “ *οἱ ἐς τὸν κόσμον πάντες οἱ βιωτικοί*, as many as are men *Chrysostom.* “ of the world, secular men, and have wives “ and children under your care ; observe how “ he commands, *even you especially*, to read the “ scriptures, and that not by the bye, but with “ a great deal of diligence.” And elsewhere he gives a reason why the reading of the scriptures is *more necessary for them*, than even for retired ecclesiastics. “ They that live in the “ world,” says he, “ being most exposed to the “ danger of being wounded (*i. e.* injured in “ their minds and frame) have most need of “ medicines.” Do not, Christians, distinguish away, and shift off from yourselves a duty which so nearly concerns you, and which you should look upon as your privilege, as really it is. God hath shewn you his word, his statutes, and his judgments ; he hath not dealt so with every nation, praise ye the Lord : Be thankful for this greatest of favours, and make suitable improvement of the goodness of God herein.

What would such a man, as the accounts we have of *Socrates* represent him to have been, have given for a book of so much wisdom, and divine philosophy, as the *Bible*? And shall Christians, that have it in their hands, and that with all manner of advantage for the understanding it, set light by it? Lay it aside, as a useless thing! And in the mean time (which is too common a case) prefer the sorriest trash, a romance, a play-book, or other impure novel to it! How many seem to be of the wretch's mind, that profanely declared, *he found more sweetness in one of Pindar's Odes, than in all Paul's Epistles*. Common civility indeed may restrain them from expressing, in words, such indecencies and rudeness in a Christian country; but their conduct gives broad hints they have not a much better taste of things. You may visit the closets of some pretending to wit and learning (I have reason for what I say) and find neither *Bible*, or any book upon the scripture there. *Homer, Juvenal, Ovid*, and other licentious poets, are all the saints they converse with; and these, you will see in the exactest order, shining in all the ornaments art can enrich them with; whilst the oracles of heaven are quite justled out, out of the heart, the house, and trampled under foot! *But, blessed Lord! there are chaster breasts, more divine souls; all do not thus despise the inestimable treasure of thy word. Let not thy kingdom, thy law, thy gospel be taken from us; that it may be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* But I must check myself. Reader, I have somewhat largely set before thee a duty of exceeding moment; and do here call upon thee,

as thou regardest thy allegiance to the great Sovereign and Lawgiver of the church ; as thou tenderest the favour, the peace and comfort of a pure heart, and upright conscience, not to neglect it. O ! cast not God's laws behind thy back ; read, study, love, and live thy Bible !

SECT. VII.

Of Meditation. The Duty described. Subjects proper for Meditation. Of more set and solemn Meditation.

2. I Now proceed to another part of the work and duty of retirement (*viz.*) *Meditation*, which the reading the scriptures may both dispose you to, and assist you in. As to its nature (to give you a sort of a description of it) *it is a fixed solemn survey, or consideration of some or other subject of religion, in order to raise the affections, form pious resolutions, improve the mind, and converse with God* : Where you see, I suppose, a particular subject chosen, and this *a divine subject* ; something that concerns religion, or may at least be improved to a religious purpose : By which I distinguish this kind of meditation from thinking or reflecting on common things, in a common way ; as, upon secular business, arts, sciences, news, &c. I add, it is *a fixed solemn consideration of a subject* ; in which it differs from more *slight and transient thinking*, even upon divine matters :

It is a designed close examination of this or that argument, or text, searching into its meaning; laying open the treasures of truth contained in it; making application of all to ourselves, by way of admonition, reproof, exhortation; mixing spiritual affections therewith, as sorrow, repentance, self-indignation, love, joy, &c. endeavouring by all to carry on some intercourse with heaven. This is the exercise I am recommending to you; concerning which let me propose a few things.

1. That this kind of meditation is not a matter of pure indifferency, or a free-will offering; which may be expected from the zeal of more eminent Christians, but may be omitted without guilt or loss: But it must be considered, with respect to many, *as a duty*, and what we are under great obligations to. Something of it seems implied in that precept to the children of *Israel*, Deut. xi. 18. *Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes: (i. e.)* they were to read them, digest them, consider them, ruminate and descant upon them, revolving them in their minds, and conversing with them on all occasions. All this the prophet may import, and consequently includes *meditation*. And yet more express to our purpose is the command, John i. 8. *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe and do according to all that's written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success: Which certainly must intend more than a bare reading, how frequent soever. Thou shalt medi-*

tate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe and do. We are to fix the mind upon God's law, in order to form the heart, and regulate the life thereby. So *Psal.* iv. 4. *Stand in awe, and sin not, commune with your heart, upon your bed, and be still, Selah: Upon your bed, or in your bed-chamber, as the Hebrew word (Mishcab) may be rendered (i. e.) in your oratory or closet; which may not improperly be referred to the employment we are now speaking of. And thus we may take that of the apostle, Col. iii. 16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, &c. or your own selves (ἐαυτοὺς, vosmet-ipsos, as the vulgar Latin renders it) which, as it is agreeable to the original, so it cannot be thought impertinent in this place; and consequently may be understood as an express command for meditation. We are to lay up the word of Christ, furnish our minds with it, and then apply it to our own hearts, by way of instruction, admonition, &c.*

And the same is recommended to us, by the examples of good men recorded in scripture. *Isaac went out to meditate in the even-tide, Gen. xxiv. 63.* a practice that, probably, he had been trained up in, by the religious care of his Father *Abraham*, as part of that *way of the Lord* he would command his household to keep, *Gen. xviii. 19.* And how frequently do we find the devout *David* thus employed? Sometimes he meditated on the word of God, *Psal. cxix. 15, 23. 48. 78.* Sometimes on the works of God, *Psal. lxxvii. 12.—cxliii. 5.* On the works of nature, *Psal. civ.* On the works of providence, *Psal. cxliii. 5.* Sometimes on God himself, *Psal. lxiii. 6.—civ. 24.* Nor did he only now

and then glance at such subjects, think on them occasionally ; but addressed himself to the work with zeal and solemnity. *Mine eyes prevent the night-watches*, saith he, *that I might meditate on thy word*, Psal. cxix. 148. *I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches*, Psal. lxiii. 6. And again, *Psal. cxix. 97. O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.*

I might urge the greatest example of all to confirm this duty (*viz.*) *that of the Lord Jesus*, I before observed, he retired not only for prayer, but meditation ; of which the scripture gives several hints, though we have not the particular instances of his meditations : For there were many more things that Jesus did (by way of devotion, no question, as well as miracle) which are not written in the gospel-history, *John xxi. 25.* “ Christ, says Mr. *Baxter*, was used to a solitary garden, that even *Judas*, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him, *John xviii. 1, 2.* And though he took his disciples thither with him, yet did he separate himself from them for more secret devotion, *Luke xxii. 41.* And though his meditation be not directly named, only his prayer ; yet it is very clearly implied, *Matt. xxvi. 38, 39.* “ His soul is first made sorrowful, with the bitter meditation on his death and suffering ; and then he poureth it out in prayer, *Mark xiv. 24.*” So that we have both precept, and example for this exercise ; it is what God has commanded, and what good men have practised, which is sufficient to place it in the number of duties, and shew our obligations to it.

2. The subjects proper for meditation are exceeding many ; enough to entertain and employ

the Christian through his whole life. Any text of the Bible that you know how suitably to improve, any doctrine, or article of religion may be chosen for the subject of your meditation; as, the existence of God, the divine attributes, (any, or all of them) the works of nature and providence; the certainty of religion; the vanity of the world; the depravity of human nature; the grace of God in redemption; the person and offices of Christ; his incarnation, example, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession; the offices of the Holy Spirit, enlightening, quickening, convincing, converting; the several graces of the Christian, as faith, repentance, love to God, meekness, humility, justice, temperance, charity; the duties of our respective relations, as parents, children, husbands, wives, &c. the sins and miscarriages of our thoughts, words and actions; the duties of the closet, of the family, of the assembly, &c. the four last things, death, judgment, heaven and hell: These, sometimes one, sometimes another of them, with a great variety more, may be the subjects of your meditation.

And that you may not be at a loss, but always have your text ready, I would advise that you note down a number of subjects, as they occur to you, either in a distinct book, kept for that purpose, or in some leaves of your *diary*. If you meet with any thing in reading, which may furnish you with a suitable subject, and supply you with useful hints in the management of it; *have a reference to it in your paper*, that you may bring it into your oratory, on occasion: And the like assistance you may have from the sermons you hear. Suppose you hear two or three a week, one or other, it may be, each of

these will give you a text for your closet : As if the text in public be, *Mat. vi. 19, 20. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, &c. or Matt. xvi. 26. What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or Rom. viii. 1. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* When you return to your closet, you may write down one or other, or all of these texts, and make use of them in your meditations, on proper occasions ; in which the sermon will ordinarily assist you, both with respect to matter and method. And let me add, that did you hear sermons with this design and view, you would hear with more attention, care, and diligence ; and with more advantage to yourselves than is common.

3. The meditation I intend (upon any of these divine subjects) *is a set solemn thing*, in which it differs (as was in part hinted before) from occasional reflections ; such as one may have walking in the street, or field ; when in the shop, in company, or business. A spiritual mind will be often sallying out, and transiently saluting this or that divine subject, even though it cannot stay upon it. But besides this, there is a *more solemn* meditation, when a person addresses himself to the work with design, and carries it on for some time ; and this is the meditation I am now considering.

4. It may be allowable in your meditations to *reflect upon a variety of subjects successively, at one and the same time* ; as on the four last things, death, judgment, heaven and hell ; or upon several particulars of the chapter you have last read ; upon some occurrences of the day, and the like. And though this sort of meditation

is less perfect, and ordinarily less profitable ; yet to some it is more practicable, and what they can more easily attain to, than that which is confined to one subject. Persons of weak heads, and little invention, know not how to keep their thoughts fixed for any time to one thing ; nor can they find matter, in a single subject, to supply a meditation : In which case this more unconfined meditation may be indulged, nor is it without its use. No doubt you may profitably go from one subject to another, and take in several at once, bestowing such reflections upon each, as readily and with ease offer themselves.

But 5. Ordinarily it will be best to fix upon a *particular* subject, and keep to that, explaining and applying it as you are able ; and, as was said above, *let it be chosen before-hand*, that you may not spend that time in seeking your text, which should be employed in improving it. Having the subject before you, proceed in your work. Suppose, for instance, heaven be your subject, you are first to consider what heaven is, enquire into the several ingredients of its happiness (*viz.*) as a state of deliverance and freedom from sorrow and suffering, from sin and imperfection, *Rev.* xxi. 4. *Heb.* xii. 13. as a state of rest, *Rev.* xiv. 13, &c. Next represent to yourselves such arguments and considerations as prove that there is such a state, arguments taken from reason, and from scripture ; and then bring all home by a particular and close application ; which indeed you will be naturally led to, by the course and tenor of your meditation. And thus you are to proceed upon other subjects (but I shall afterwards lay

before you more complete examples and specimens for your assistance.

6. Besides those that are chosen and known, *occasional* subjects will sometimes offer, and should take place of others, as circumstances may recommend them; the scripture you read will frequently suggest a text for your meditation. So, at night, the occurrences of the day past; what you meet with in conversation; any remarkable providence of God toward yourselves, your family, your neighbours; these will afford proper matter for serious reflection; and it will be best to attend to such subjects, as being most seasonable and instructive *at that time*. As when the providence of God presents you with a notable example of the vanity of the world, not only when riches *make themselves wings, and suddenly fly away*, but when the true enjoyment is lost (which is a very common case), but when you observe men of an aspiring ambitious spirit, that love to make a bustle in the world, *that lay house to house, and join field to field*, as if they would be placed alone in the midst of the earth; how they disquiet themselves in vain; what snares and temptations surround them; how much plunged in the dirt, and loaded with thick clay, *so that they cannot look up*; have no sense of God and religion, no savour and relish of heavenly things, but are utterly lost to all that is virtuous, wise, and good. This may lead your thoughts to a most useful meditation.

So when you have a remarkable instance of human frailty, in the sudden surprising death of any of your neighbours, and acquaintance. Last week, say you, I was worshipping in the same

place with such a one, or was conversing with him in such a company ; and now, *in three or four days sickness*, he is snatched away, and gone into eternity. Such a providence as this should not be overlooked, we should carry it with us into our oratories, make it our text, and bestow a few devout reflections upon it. And if the person was young, just entering upon the world, forming to himself pleasing prospects, or pursuing his gratifications with full career ; that circumstance will not want its instruction. It is said of a merchant, that talking with his friend, who fell down dead before him ; he immediately upon it retired, and considered it to so good purpose, that it became the means of his conversion.

If you are cast into the company of *vile persons*, as the psalmist calls some, *Psal. xv. 4.* Such fools as make a mock of sin, that sit in the chair of the scornful, that toss about damnation in their profane mouths ; or if they have not arrived to this pitch of wickedness, yet swell with pride and vanity, are earthly and sensual : Even hence you may find matter for a profitable meditation, representing to yourselves the wisdom of Solomon's advice, *Prov. i. 10. If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.* And of the psalmist's practice, and resolution ; *I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked, Psal. xxvi. 4, 5.* exciting your gratitude for that grace which has made you to differ ; rejoicing in your more happy circumstances, and infinitely more desirable state, even though in a shade of outward meanness and contempt, and begging God would not gather your soul with sinners. Indeed a great

deal of that spiritual-mindedness, that divine heavenly frame and temper we should endeavour after, lies here, (*viz.*) in *observing and improving daily occurrences, and conversing with God in the variety of his providences.* And if we could bring them (many of them) into our closets, and seriously preach from them to our own souls, it would be of no small use to us.

7. This meditation may sometimes *be more solemn*, carried on to a greater length, and managed with greater skill and labour. Besides what is done in the ordinary stated course of your closet religion, it will be advisable now and then to set about this duty with more seriousness and solemnity; as when *the north wind awakes, and the south wind blows upon your garden*; when in the most devout frame, and your souls make you like the chariots of *Ammi-nadib*; on the Lord's-day evening, we will suppose, on a sacrament-day, after some awakening providence or sermon. In a word, whenever a concurrence of circumstances render you most sufficient, and best qualified for the duty, and consequently invite you to it. In the affairs of the world men have their *happy seasons*, and opportunities of extraordinary advantage; when they apply themselves to their business with more than common diligence and pains, they can abridge themselves, as you may observe, not only of their diversion and pleasure, but of their sleep and common food (the shopkeeper will stand on his feet on a market-day from morning till night, to receive a few shillings and pounds, and think a good market a sufficient recompence for his self-denial), and shall not the Christian have his *favourable seasons, his market-days*, as I may call them, for his soul?

When he exerts his faculties, and makes his most vigorous efforts towards heaven ; when he sets himself apart for a more close and strict intercourse with God, seeking God with his *whole heart* : And on these occasions, on these days of more solemn religion, such meditation as I am here recommending, will be pertinent and suitable.

I will only add, 8. That though the common Christian should not be solicitous, and over-careful about order and method, which it cannot be supposed he is master of ; yet it is proper he should *observe some method*, and range his thoughts in the best manner he can ; which is necessary both to prevent confusion, and also to assist the affections. There is something in the very constitution of our minds and faculties, that makes *method* naturally agreeable to us, even though we understand scarce any thing of the rules and lays of it, nor are able to discern when a discourse is irregular and immethodical, any otherwise than *by feeling it* ; and therefore I cannot but recommend it even to the unlearned, that, in such exercises as these, they would endeavour to dispose their thoughts in the best order they are able : They need not be scrupulous about it, and yet should not be altogether careless.

As to expression and style, less regard is to be had to that ; quaint phrases, measured periods, &c. need be none of your concern ; for as they are of little use, even in studied compositions of this kind, so they cannot be expected from ordinary Christians, in such exercises : Though the more *rational and argumentative* the meditation is, the greater the advantage is like

to be ; and of this nature I shall endeavour to make the examples I have to offer, and which I shall now subjoin.

SECT. VIII.

Several Specimens and Examples of such Meditation, as has been described. Examples of the more solemn Meditation.

THIS duty of divine meditation being of exceeding importance in the Christian life, and yet I am afraid little understood and practised by the generality of Christians, even such as dare not neglect other duties of the like nature, as reading and prayer ; I have thought it necessary more distinctly to consider it. Something has been said, both to prove it a duty, and to explain the nature of it : and that none may be discouraged from setting about it, on the account of their apprehended inability, and want of skill for the management of it : I shall, for their assistance, propose some examples of such meditations, as they are to employ themselves in. And let the first subject be *death*, which may be considered either from a particular text of scripture, or without it. If you chuse the former, that may be proper enough, *Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed for all men once to die ;* and having put up a few petitions, you are to contrive and fix the method, and so proceed.

A Meditation on DEATH.

HERE, say you, I shall, 1. Consider what death The first is in itself, and consequences. 2. That it is Specimen certain. 3. Take notice of some circumstances of it. 4. Apply all to myself.

1. As to the first of these, *What is this*, my senses in a great measure inform me, *that it is the separation of soul and body*, which the scripture also confirms; it is a breaking the union between these two, so that they go different ways. *Eccles. xii. 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it.* It is a dissolution, *I desire to depart*, or be dissolved, *Phil. i. 23.*

Its consequences, with respect to the body, are, the privation or loss of life, sense, motion; it takes down *this tabernacle*, 2 Cor. v. 1. leaves it a cold lifeless lump, a loathsome carcase. Let me *bury my dead out of my sight*, says Abraham of his once beloved Sarah; so that now it lies rotting in the dust, *Gen. xxiii. 4. Sees corruption*, *Psal. xlix. 9.* and is preyed upon by worms: *After my skin the worms destroy this body*, Job xix. 26. This death does, this it will shortly do, with respect to myself. This body I am now so tender of, so careful about, that I pamper so much, will be the food of worms, will be *sown in corruption*. It is indeed an admirable structure, and discovers the exquisite wisdom of its Author; *I am fearfully and wonderfully made*; but death will mar all its beauty.

As to the soul, the consequences of it are its immediate dislodgement, its departure from the body, *Philip. i. 23.* At death I shall *put off* this

body, shall use its members, organs, and instruments no more ; shall see with these eyes, hear with these ears, speak by this tongue no more ; nor shall I enjoy its pleasures, or taste its gratifications any more for ever. In this respect, *post mortem nulla voluptas*, there is no delight in the grave ; *nunquam joca dabis*, thou shalt jest, sport, &c. no more ; as the dying emperor said to his departing soul. Nor must I only quit the body at death, but the whole world, and all its enjoyments : *I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world*, Isa. xxxviii. 11. My trade, estate, friends, relations must be left ; all my projects, thoughts, contrivances, studies, &c. will be over for ever : *For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave*, Eccles. ix. 10. All employment, civil or religious, all endeavours (that are in the nature of means, and concern preparation) death puts an end to. *The grave cannot praise thee, they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living shall praise thee, as I do this day*, Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. And then at death, as the soul leaves this world and state, so it enters upon another, *a new state*, and very much *an unknown state*. Death carries us from a world of bodies to a world of spirits ; changes the manner of our acting ; the object of our enjoyments, and the enjoyments themselves. I must then part with this body, but how shall I act out of it ? How shall I see without an eye ? understand and reason without a brain ? love without an heart ? Lord, thou knowest ! And as it is another, a new state, *so it is an eternal state*. After death my condition is fixed ; I must either be happy or miserable, and that *fully and for ever*. When *Lazarus* died, he was

carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, and was comforted, Luke xvi. 22. 25. The rich man died, and the next we hear of him was, that in hell he lift up his eyes, being tormented in flames, ver. 23, 24. Nor were the comforts of the one, and torments of the other, liable to any change. No, the gulph is fixed, their portion eternal, ver. 26. And, O my soul, how awful a thing is dying! how surprising the change death makes; and how much does it challenge thy thoughts and care!

But must I die, change states, and pass into an unseen, unknown world? Yes, this is certain, it is appointed for all men once to die. *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*, Gen. iii. 19. Death indeed was not due to, and designed for primitive uncorrupted nature; and therefore is not properly a debt to nature, as it is often called. Had not man sinned, he would have been, by the favour of God, immortal. I do not mean, that he would have lived always on this earth, but after such a time of probation, trial, and preparation, as divine wisdom had appointed, colonies of the more excellent refined souls would, I suppose, have been translated (without dying, and with their bodies) into the regions above. But sin has brought the curse of mortality upon the world, Rom. v. 12. *In Adam all die*, 1 Cor. xv. 21. all without exception; the greatest monarch, as well as the poorest peasant: *Ye are Gods, but shall die like men*, Psal. lxxxii. 7. Death is the way of all the earth, Josh. xxiii. 14. The grave is the house appointed for all living; it is impossible to avoid the stroke of it; none can retain the spirit in death, there is no discharge in that war, Eccles. viii. 8.

2. The
Certainty
of Death.

But thou needest not, O my soul ! a multitude of arguments to prove what thine own observation, and even senses may convince thee of. Dost thou not observe, that one generation comes, and another goes ; and that thus it has been from the beginning ? Our fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever ? Thy own father, who fourscore years ago was not, has been dead twenty or thirty years. How many of thy acquaintance, in the neighbourhood, are dead and gone, within the compass of thirty years ! Search the register of the parish where thou livest, and it is not likely thou wilt find *one of those now alive*, that were baptized an hundred years ago. Nay, look through a kingdom, through the earth, and ask what are become of the inhabitants thereof, that were acting their part on the stage of this world an hundred years since ; are they not all swept away, and passed into eternity ? Yea, most of them forgotten, and the places that knew them know them no more ! *Thou seest, O my soul ! that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish*, Psal. xlix. 10.

3. Some Circumstances of Death. Nor is it only certain that I must die, but I must *soon die* ; Death is not, cannot be a great way off, though I attain to the years of my fathers, in the house of their pilgrimage. *Job* observes, when the term of human life was not so much reduced as now, that *man who is born of a woman is but of few days*, chap. xiv. 1. And the psalmist afterwards complains, that his *days were but an hand-breadth*, Psal. xxxix. 5. Our life is a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and vanisheth away, Jam. iv. 14. Nay, so inconsiderable, minute, and even nothing is our ex-

istence here, that we are compared to a *sleep* or dream, *Psal. xc. 5.* and our whole life confined within the narrow limits of a *day*. *In the morning*, says he, *they are like grass which groweth up, in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth*, ver. 6. O my soul! consider this, look a little before thee (and thou needest not look far, thy day, thy short day is spending, it will soon be night) look forward, I say, and thou wilt find thyself in the arms of death; a cold sweat sitting on thy languishing body; thy breath and pulse ceasing, and thy soul taking its flight. That vapour of thy life will soon vanish away. O believe what thou canst not deny, and frequently represent this scene and state of things to thyself; place thyself among the dead, free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave.

And as death is near, so it is hastening apace, *we are going to the grave*, *Eccles. ix. 10.* And how constant, how quick the motion? *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, than a post, they flee away*, says *Job*, Chap. vii. 6.—ix. 25. Nor do I know, how near, how surprising the summons of death may be; the fool in the parable was struck in the midst of his security, in the very moment of his sensual triumph. *Soul*, says he, *thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*; and behold, like *Belshazzar*, when carousing in the consecrated vessels of the temple, the fingers of a man's hand-writing appear, *this night*, says God, *thy soul shall be required of thee*, *Luke, xii. 19, 20.* O how startling a message, how amazing the disappointment! May this never be my case, but may I watch, and pray always, that *that day* come not upon me unawares. *My soul, boast not*

thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a night may bring forth. Talk not of going into such a city, and continuing a year, and getting gain ; for what is thy life, it is even a vapour !

I might observe, it is but *once* that I must die : It is *appointed for all men once to die*, Heb. xi. 27. *If a man die, shall he live again ? No, he lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more*, Job. xiv. 12. Thou hast, O my soul ! but one cast for eternity ; if thou forgettest the work and errand of life, and miscarriest at death, thou art lost for ever. There is no *tabula post naufragium*, no plank to swim ashore on, if thou art shipwrecked here. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation ;* but there is no work in the grave, no repentance after death, or return to life. *Now, or never.*

A second Meditation on DEATH.

<sup>†The Ap-
plication.</sup> **AND** now, O my soul, review this momentous subject, and receive instruction from thence. Must I die, soon die (*i. e.*) must this body be reduced to dust ? This should teach me how to esteem and value it, *viz.* as a fading, falling, perishing thing. The *earthly house of this tabernacle*, saith the Apostle, *shall be dissolved*, 2 Cor. v. 1. *i. e.* taken down, pulled to pieces ; alluding, some have thought, to the taking down the tabernacle under the law. First, the most holy things were uncovered and removed ; so the soul, that most divine part of man, the unseen inhabitant, *that ark* in the tabernacle, is first withdrawn. Then the veils and curtains were folded up, and thus the skin and flesh is destroyed and eaten by worms. And in the last place, the

boards of the tabernacle were disjointed and separated; so that the sinews and bones of the human body are loosed and perish. All which *Solomon* expresses in a variety of elegant phrases, *Eccles. xii.* from the beginning. This I shall shortly experience in my own case; death will dissolve the tabernacle, the curious machine of the body, extinguish the lamp of life, break the hidden springs of motion; the hands shall act, the foot move no more, the lungs breathe, the stomach digest, the tongue speak no more: It will utterly spoil the features and colours, destroy that symmetry and beauty, which is the great idol of vain minds. In short, death draweth the pins, and then the whole frame falls to pieces. And why so much ado about an house of clay, a tottering tabernacle, a poor carcase, adorning, pampering, pleasing it? O my soul! consider *it is a vile body*; so the scripture calleth it, *Phil. iii. 21.* and so death will make it; and let this moderate thy affections to it.

Further,—Must I die, and leave this body rotting in the grave, thus dissolved; how little account should I make of those enjoyments which are *confined to the body*, and entirely depend upon it? It is observable, when *Solomon* had laid mankind in the dust, he immediately repeateth the main argument of his book, *vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity*, *Eccles. xii. 7, 8.* And indeed whatever excellency there may be in these things, in themselves, or we may imagine there is in them, they must needs be vanity to dying creatures. Riches, honours, beauty, the whole circle of fleshly gratifications, are but conveniences for a perishing body, and must perish when the body perisheth. O my soul! look out of the grave,

out of the dust, upon the pleasures and entertainments of the poor deluded sensualist, and then pronounce concerning them: say what they are, and never chuse that for thy happiness, that terminates in the body, and falleth with it.

2 Peter i. 14. Again, must I die, *i. e.* depart from this world, leave it and all its enjoyments, certainly and soon leave it? It is evident it was never designed to be my portion, nor can I, without the extremest folly, take up with it; and rest in it as such. Had it every thing else to recommend it, it is enough to cool my affections to it, to sully its glory, and strip it of all its charms, *that it is so momentary*. It can be no happiness to me, was it a thousand times more excellent and valuable than it is, who must die, nay, I am *just ready to die and leave it*. And O my soul! why should I be fond of what I cannot enjoy, and pursue a shadow that is flying from me? It is very instructive, that my great Lord and Master calls present things *another man's*, and distinguishes them from what is *our own*, Luke xvi. 12. which the psalmist's words may serve for a comment upon: *be not afraid* (or disturbed, uneasy) *when one is made rich, and the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him*, Psal. xlix. 16, 17. No, *he leaveth his wealth to others*, ver. 10. And this is really the state of things with us; this is the tenure of our enjoyments. Remember, O my soul; thou art passing through this world, and shalt soon pass out of it; whatever I have it is not properly an inheritance, I am only a tenant *for life*, and indeed *at will*: When it shall please God to require my soul of me, *whose* shall these things be I have provided? Luke xii. 20. It is certain,

whosoever they are, they are not *mine*, but pass to others, *i. e. pass through their hands*. O! may I chiefly value and mind *my own things*, the true riches, and love this world as one that is leaving it.

Further, must I die, leave the body, and subsist without it, in a separate state? Must I enter upon another, a different and new life; it highly concerneth me *now to acquaint* myself with the other after-state; to abstract from the body, and live above it as far as I can: to begin that life which is more suited to my own nature, as a spirit, *viz. the rational divine life*. Was this my only duration, there would be some reason for the epicure's conduct, *let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die*, 1. Cor. xv. 32. Why should they not make the best they can of this life, who expect no other? But this is not my case: Death is a dissolution, not a destruction. I then *depart*, but am not extinct: I must live and exist even to everlasting, when I have quit the body; and this should direct me how to live before-hand; particularly, it should teach me "to live without the body now as much as ^{Sherlock} on death, p. 53. "possibly I can; to have but very little commerce with flesh and sense; to wean myself "from bodily pleasures, that when I use them, "it may be without fondness, and may let "them alone without being uneasy for the "want of them. A wise man should thus "reason with himself; if I grow so fond of this "body, and the pleasures of it; if I can relish no "other pleasures; if I value nothing else, what "shall I do when I leave this body? For bodily "pleasures can last no longer than my body "doth: And what shall I do in the next world, "when I shall be stript of the body? For

“ whatever covering I may have, I shall have
 “ no flesh and blood about me ; and therefore
 “ all the pleasures I value now, will then vanish
 “ like a dream ; whatever alteration death will
 “ make in the temper and disposition of the
 “ mind (as to the desire of bodily pleasures)
 “ it is certain a man wholly sunk into flesh and
 “ sense, is not capable of living happily out of
 “ his body, unless a new scene of material and
 “ sensible pleasures could be found out to en-
 “ tertain him. His very soul is sensualized,
 “ and therefore is incapable of the pleasures
 “ of a spiritual life.” May I consider this in
 time, and now be attempting, and essaying
 something of the life of the other world, of the
 separate unbodied state ! This, death, as it is a
 leaving the body, admonishes me of. How
 wretched shall I be, if I can relish no pleasures
 but what are derived through the senses of the
 body, when I shall shortly have done with the
 body for ever.

Again, must I die, and but *once* die ? En-
 deavour, O my soul ! to make sure work for
 dying, and for eternity, that I may die well,
 and not miscarry in that *last and great change*.

Plut.
Apo-
thegm.

An error here is fatal, and cannot be corrected ;
 consequently the utmost caution is due in order
 to avoid it. It was a good answer to one, that
 asked why the *Lacedæmonians* were so slow in
 passing capital judgments ; why so many exa-
 minations taken ; so many defences permitted
 to the accused ; and, after conviction and
 sentence, such a space of time before execu-
 tion ; because, saith he, *a mistake in the case is*
incorrigible. They may destroy the living, but
 cannot revive the dead ; and thus it is in the
 affair before me : When the sentence of death

is past and executed, it cannot be reversed ; my state is determined for ever. It is appointed for all *once* to die, once and *but once* : They do not live again, have no further opportunity to repent of what was ill done, or do what was undone. Help me therefore, O my God, to secure this main point, this greatest point ; to get ready for dying, dying with safety and comfort !

The COMPLAINT.

AND O my soul ! what reason for censure ? How undue and irregular thy regards to the body ? How much hast thou indulged it ? How quick thy sense and relish of its pleasures and gratifications ? *i. e. The pleasures of a brute.* How hast thou been caring for the body ? making *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof* ? Bewail this, O my soul, and take to thyself the shame that is due : *Wilt thou not blush, as it were, when among the angels, to think how low thou once stooped in the drudgery of sense, in serving divers lusts and pleasures ; how much thou hast debased thy rational nature, and hast prostituted thyself to sordid impure embraces !*

And O ! wretch that I am, that I have pursued with so much eagerness a perishing world ; a world I am just dying out of : That I should so much cleave to its enjoyments, when I cannot but know, they will shortly be to me as if they had never been. *The time is short : It remaineth, saith the apostle, that they that have wives, be as if they had none ; and they that weep, as if they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not ; for the fashion of this world passeth away,*

1 Cor. vii. 30, 31. But how little of this indifferency has there been in the temper of my mind, and course of my acting? Alas! how carnal, how earthly am I? How much sold under sin, and enslaved to sense? And in the mean time, how have I forgot my latter end, and put the evil day far from me? I have rather talked and acted like one that dreams of an earthly immortality, than like a stranger on earth; one that knoweth he has no continuing city, but is here to-day, and gone to-morrow. O may I receive proper admonition from hence! Lord, help by thy grace, forgive my stupidity and folly, and teach me henceforth *so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.*

A third Meditation on DEATH.

The RESOLUTION.

O MY soul! change thy measures, alter thy course; act more consistently with thy condition in the present world, and thy belief of what is to come. What! art thou dying, and going out of the body, going into another state, a state of a quite different nature, of different action and enjoyment? Resolve upon a suitable conduct; *particularly* resolve to withdraw from the body as far as thou canst; to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof: This is necessary to prepare and fit thee for the happiness of an unbodied state. *Austin* supposed that such as died with earthly sensual desires unmortified, retained those desires in the other world, and felt the uneasiness of them, which is the only *purgatory* he could allow: But this

will not, I presume, be the case of holy souls ; when the house (the body) is pulled down, the leprosy of sin, with respect to them, will be perfectly cured. In the mean time, without some progress in mortification, no heaven can be expected : *The pure in heart only shall see God*, Matt. v. 8. And the greater the purity and mortification, the fuller the enjoyment.

I would *also* resolve to esteem this world more suitably to my condition in it, and relation to it ; to consider myself as a stranger, a passenger, one that is leaving it, and accordingly would govern my affections to it, my care and concern about it. When *Chrysostom* was banished, and his friend *Siriacus* lamented his case, he writes back to him, and telleth him what his sense of the matter was. “ You *now begin*, saith he, to “ bewail my banishment, but I have done so “ *for a long time* ; for since I knew heaven was “ my country, I have esteemed the whole earth “ as a state of exilement : *Constantinople*, from “ whence I am expelled, is as far distant from “ paradise, as the desert they send me to.” And thus it is with me, this is my condition ; I am here a sort of an exile ; *from home* : O my soul ! look to thy own country, transfer thy treasure thither, *set thy affections on things above, and not on things on the earth* : *Having food and raiment*, saith the apostle, *therewith be content*, 1 Tim. vi. 8. And indeed it is enough for one in my circumstances, that is leaving this world, and hastening to eternity. Resolve never to seek great things for thyself ; suffer not the world to delude thee : If it begin to encroach, to insinuate and appear with its flatteries and charms ; let the thoughts of mortality shew its nakedness and vanity, and throw it under foot,

Bates
Four last
things. p.
98.

where it ought always to be. What vast preparations do some men make for an earthly happiness? How restless their projects? How boundless their desires? They pluck down their barns, and build greater, as if they had goods laid up, not only for many years, but many ages, or at least were aiming at such a fund; and behold God smites their gourd, and it withereth! Death arrests them in the midst of their schemes, and in that very hour their thoughts perish! O my soul, consider this, and learn wisdom and caution; endeavour to live disengaged from the world: *If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them*: Buy as if thou didst not possess; and, above all, beg, earnestly beg God would save thee from the (temper of the) men of this world, who have their portion in this life.

I would resolve and endeavour a meetness for the other state; for the inheritance of the saints in light. Heaven must be begun here; the foundation laid in the disposition and frame of the mind. An unsanctified person could not relish heaven, was he admitted thither, no more than a swine a concert of music, or the society of angels. Lord, tune my heart for the work above!

I would also resolve to be conversant in the other world in my thoughts, meditations, and desires, often ascending thither, placing myself in the assembly of the just, accompanying my departed friends into their blessed mansions, joining, in my poor manner, in their anthems; trying to sing the song of *Zion*. This will make the thoughts of death easy to me, and the thing itself safe. I shall then go to a world and work, which, in some measure, I know; and

have that to comfort me at my dissolution, the dying martyr had, that *though I change my place, yet not my company.*

Further, I would endeavour to have frequent reference to this solemn and awful period of *dying*, both in my civil and religious affairs; endeavouring so to act in all things, as that I may review my work with comfort in a dying hour; often saying to myself, how will this look at death? What opinion shall I have of it, when death stares me in the face? Some there have been, who scarce put up a serious prayer, without a special reference to their latter end, and fervent petitions for the divine presence with them at that time; nay, scarce awake out of sleep, but the scene of death and eternity opens before their eyes. May this be the bent and frame of my mind!

Lastly, I resolve, by the grace of God, to hasten and dispatch my preparation, that I may be able to say in my measure, as my Lord and Master did, *Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do*, John xvii. 4. I would leave nothing undone that is necessary to be done; whatever my hand finds to do, I would do it *speedily*, lest that day come upon me unawares. In short, if there be any iniquity in my hands, any omissions, neglects, unmortified lusts, any thing that may make a death-bed uneasy, I would not rest till I have got it removed. These are my purposes, my resolutions: May they be established!

The Colloquy and Aspiration.

AND now, O my God! I turn myself to thee: I want wisdom, courage, zeal, resolution for

the work before me ; I want many graces, and fresh supplies of every grace. I am imprisoned and insnared in this body ; surrounded with a variety of objects that strike upon my senses, and dangerously insinuate themselves. O defend me by thy grace, raise me above the animal life ; help me to regulate and govern the passions and inclinations of the body ; to withstand the allurements of sensible things : Strengthen my faith, my views of eternity, and enable me to look beyond this *inch of time*. And O that I may be in good earnest ; may I trifle no more in the concerns of my soul and another world ! *I must die, I must die*, said one, when asked the reason of his extraordinary zeal and diligence in religion. O my soul, think of dying, and live for eternity ; redeem thy time, improve thy talents, discharge the duties of thy office, thy place and relations, as becomes a dying man. Lord, help by thy grace, work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure ; to thee I resign myself, on thee I depend, keep what I have committed to thee against that day ; and when *I walk through the valley of the shadow of death*, be thou with me, let *thy rod and thy staff* comfort me.

A Meditation on the Immortality of the Soul.

A Second Specimen. **H**AVING put up a few petitions for divine assistance, you set yourself to consider your subject ; and if you think proper to make a text of scripture the foundation of your discourse, that will not be unsuitable, *Eccles. xii. 7. And the Spirit shall return to God who gave it ; then shall the*

dust return to the earth, as it was, and the Spirit, &c. which plainly implies, that the soul dies not with the body, it goes upwards, *Eccles. iii. 21. It returns to God*, says the text: And here, say you, I will (1) consider the evidences of this great fundamental doctrine of my religion; (2) next briefly inquire what may be intended by that phrase, *returneth unto God that gave it*; and then add practical reflections. As to the evidence of this doctrine, I shall call to mind such considerations, as I have found to have the greatest weight with me; as

1. That the soul hath nothing in its own nature that tendeth to, or threatens a dissolution: It is a pure, spiritual, immaterial substance, not * compounded, or made up of jarring principles or dissimilar parts; it has no seeds of corruption in itself, and therefore supposing the will of God to continue it in its existence and being, there can be no danger of its perishing.

2. The dignity and excellency of the soul is an argument for its immortality: God has made man but *a little lower than the angels*; set him at the very top of the creation; constituted him his representative in the world, and Lord over all the creatures; and to qualify him for his station and rank, has distinguished him with the most excellent faculties. We know indeed but little of ourselves, of the nature of our faculties, and the manner of their operations; but so much I can understand, as is a plain inti-

* *Et quum simplex animi natura esset, neque haberet in se quicquam admixtum dispar sui atque dissimile, non posse eum dividi. Cic. de Senect.*

mation to me that I am not a *mere body* : I find and feel in myself a principle, distinct from matter, and superior to sense ; and when I consider it in all its capacities, I cannot but infer it is designed for immortality. How noble and even angelical a power is that of the understanding ! It can penetrate into the secret recesses of nature ; reason, infer, reflect and carry on a chain of thoughts with a clear connection ; can survey the whole creation, ascend above it, and contemplate the glorious author of all : So the will, another faculty of the human soul, the principle of all freedom and liberty, how excellent and even God-like a power is it ? It can chuse or refuse, and by a sovereign sort of empire, controul even the strongest and most impetuous inclinations of the sensitive appetite. Would *Socrates* have taken the fatal cup, and died a martyr for the unity of the Godhead, opposing the superstition and idolatry of the country, had he not had an inward principle, different from body, and which over-ruled the love of life ? In short, consider man in all the endowments of his mind, in his understanding, will, conscience, memory, as acting under the awe of God and religion : Consider him in his prospects and views of futurity ; in all his desires, designs and tendencies, how admirable a creature will he appear ? He is *nexus utriusque mundi*, by his body allied to this earth, by his Spirit near akin to heaven : Hence * *Seneca* calls the soul a God sojourning in a human body ; a certain domestic God, as another calleth it.

* *Quid aliud est anima Deus in corpore humano hospitans :*
 τὸς ἐνοικῶν θεός. Hierocles.

And can we imagine such a creature made for a day, as it were, to exist only during its union with the body? How much of our short time is spent in infancy and non-age, when we can relish little but the animal life, or life of sense, and scarce differ from mere brutes, but in our shape! How much afterwards is passed away in childish toys! How long before we understand what it is to be men, and how much longer often, before we know what it is to be Christians! We are almost ready to leave the world, ere we rightly apprehend our errand into it: And shall we suppose we are designed for no after-existence? Is it consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, to frame so excellent a creature purely for the present state? To take a few turns upon the stage of the world, to taste of its vanity and curse, to sigh and weep awhile, to view some scenes of sorrow and folly, and then pass away and be no more? “If the question *How Van-* were put,” says one, “Wherefore did God *nity of* make man? Who would not be ashamed so to *men mor-* answer it, He made him to eat and drink and *tal,* take his pleasures, to gather up wealth, for he knows not whom; to use his invention, that each one may become a talk and wonder to the rest; and when he hath fetched a few turns upon the theatre, and entertained the eyes of beholders, with a short scene of impertinencies, descend, and never be heard of more. What! that he should come into the world, furnished with such powers and endowments for this! It were a like case if one should be clad in scarlet to go to plough, or curiously instructed in arts and sciences to attend hogs.” The dignity of man’s nature, the excellent capacities of the rational spirit,

declare him not only capable of, but appointed to another state; and if we consider how short this life is, how full of vanity and vexation, we cannot but infer it as a thing most agreeable to reason, and the perfections of the wise Creator, that such a creature should not be confined for his being and happiness, within the narrow bounds of time, but *is made for immortality*.

3. It is considerable to my present purpose, that there seems some sense of immortality impressed upon the whole rational nature: All mankind, *Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians*, have discovered an apprehension of a future state: The books of the ancient philosophers, both Greeks and Romans, are full of it (though it is granted they treat the subject as those that wanted the help of scripture-revelation). *Homer*, who is supposed to have flourished near a thousand years before Christ, speaks of a common receptacle for souls, which he calls *Hades*, where good men live in a pleasing quiet, and wicked men are condemned to very great punishments: *Plato* discourses copiously upon the soul's immortality, who flourished about 400 years before Christ; and *Thales* taught the same doctrine in *Greece*, near 300 years before him. In short, we have here what that great philosopher *Cicero* calls the law of nature, (*viz.*) the * consent of nations. I might add,

* *ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος*, the soul is immortal, saith one of the philosophers, in so many words. *Plutarch*, in a consolatory discourse to *Apollonius* upon the death of his son, almost copieth the words of *Solomon*: He is gone, saith he, whither he came from; the earth to earth again: *πνεῦμα δὲ ἦν*, but the spirit is ascended, gone upwards, (*i. e.*) returned to God. And in the like strain many others of them speak.

the wiser and better any part of mankind have been, the more lively their sense of immortality ; the stronger and more vigorous their desires after it : *We that are in this tabernacle*, saith the apostle, *do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed* (mere dying was not the thing they aimed at), *but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life*, 2 Cor. v. 4. Here they find themselves compassed about with infirmity, at a distance from the chief good, and wearied with constant repetitions of vanity ; so that the apostle does but speak the common sense of the best saints, *Rom. vii. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death !* Now can I think, can I allow myself once to think, that there is nothing in the joint suffrages of all mankind in a matter of this nature ! Will God delude and frustrate the expectations of his creatures ? disappoint the desires he himself has planted in them, especially the desires of his own children, whom he has begotten again unto a lively hope ?

4. I may argue the certainty of another state and of the soul's immortality from the justice of God : Rewards and punishments, eternal rewards and punishments, are the sanctions of the divine law. He has said, *It shall be well with the righteous, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings ; and that it shall be ill with the wicked, for the reward of his hands shall be given him*, Isa. iii. 10, 11. God will make a distinction between the good and the bad, between those that fear him, and fear him not : This he has declared he will do ; and we may infallibly conclude it from the justice of his nature, *the Judge of all the earth will do right*. But this is so far from being done in the present world, than the equal

distributions of Providence have been the offence of all ages; *Wherefore*, says the prophet, *doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?* Jer. xii.

1. And Solomon observes it as an instance of that vanity, which was his complaint and exercise, *That there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness.* Eccles. vii. 15. The inference from which must be, as he himself elsewhere makes it, chap. iii. 17. *God shall judge the righteous and the wicked* (i. e.) *hereafter*, when things come to be reviewed by the great Governor of the world; *then* all shall be rectified, and a decision made in favour of the righteous; so that thou hast, O my soul, the fullest assurance of thy own future existence. God rules the world by hopes and fears, and fills the minds of men with presages of eternity. It would be blasphemy to suppose that these are groundless, a mere fiction and contrivance to keep the world in awe; consequently all shall be made good in an after-state; the promises fulfilled, the threatenings executed, and the soul exist for ever, that it may receive its retribution.

5. With me who am a Christian, it confirms my belief of this great article of the immortality of the soul, that the Son of God thought not his own precious blood too great a price for its redemption. Man, by his apostacy, had forfeited his happiness, and in that respect *lost his soul*; to recover which was the design of the Lord Jesus in his undertaking: And how expensive and costly a work was it! How great his condescension, how low did he stoop! Being in the form of God, he took upon him the form of

a servant, and in that state and condition he lived. During his private life I find him employed as an ordinary mechanic; hence he is not only called *the carpenter's son*, but *the carpenter*, Mark vi. 3. And *Justin Martyr* saith, *he made ploughs and harrowes*. When he entered upon the stage of public activity, poverty and contempt soon followed him; he had *not where to lay his head*, Matt. viii. 20. lived upon contribution, *Luke* viii. 3. endured the contradiction of sinners, malice of men, and rage of devils: And how amazing his last conflicts in the garden! particularly, when he sweat *drops of blood*, *Luke* xxii. 44. and on the cross, when he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. How reproachful and grievous the circumstances of his death! He was mocked, reviled, spit upon, smote on the face, pierced, crowned with thorns, and crucified; hung up between heaven and earth, as one worthy of neither; where he died a public victim, a spectacle to angels and men! And such a spectacle the world never saw before! The only begotten of the Father dying upon a cross! Well might the rocks rend, and the sun hide its face!

And what was all this for? What meant this strange thing, the Lord from heaven united to flesh, tabernacling in a human body, groaning, bleeding, dying? What was the design of all this? Was it only to purchase a short life of vanity, after which there is to be an end of my being, capacities, enjoyments for ever? To suppose this, would be to blaspheme my Redeemer, and count the *blood of the covenant* an *unholy* (*i. e.*) a common thing. O my soul, see thy own worth in the price that was paid for

thee, and infer hence thy immortal nature : If the soul be not immortal, Christ died in vain, and the work of redemption is a jest.

6. My *Bible* puts this matter out of all doubt. The text informs me, that, at death, when the body returns to the earth, *the spirit returns to God*. *Job* speaks of it as a matter of full certainty with him, that when *the worms had destroyed his body*, he should yet *see God*, *Job* xix. 26. And how clear the testimony of this truth from the blessed Jesus, the faithful *AMEN ! In my Father's house*, saith he, *are many mansions ; I will receive you to myself*, *John* xiv. 2, 3. And again, *Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*, *Matt.* x. 28. He supposes the body may be destroyed, and yet the soul untouched ; plainly signifying, that it is a principle distinct from the body, and can subsist without it. He tells the converted thief on the cross, that that *day* he should *be with him in paradise*, *Luke* xxiii. 43. And in the moment of his own dissolution, commended his spirit into the hands of his Father, *Luke* xxiii. 46. And to mention no more, with how much solemnity are the dead pronounced blessed, *Rev.* xiv. 13. *Blessed are the dead—their works follow them* (i. e.) into the other state, where they find and enjoy a blessedness. And, O my soul ! canst thou hesitate about a doctrine that has so great authority to support it ; that is confirmed by so many testimonies from heaven ?

Nor do I want, 7. What I may call *sensible evidence* of a future state of existence : To say nothing of the stories of apparitions, or the appearance of departed spirits (which yet I apprehend are not to be wholly neglected, as of no weight in this question), purely because too

many of these stories are fable, there have been lying wonders, false miracles; but that is no argument against true ones, or that there never were any such. But not to insist on this, the scripture affords instances of departed spirits, subsisting in a state of separation, and sometimes returning back again into our world; as that of the *Shunamite's* son, 2 *Kings* iv. 18—35. That of *Jairus's* daughter, *Matt.* ix. 18. And of *Lazarus*, *John* xi. 39. The apostle *Peter* speaks of *spirits in prison* (i. e.), the spirits of those that died in the days of *Noah*, 1 *Pet.* iii. 19. And the apostle *Jude* of the *Sodomites* (destroyed by fire so many ages before) as then *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, *Jude* 7. And when *Christ* was transfigured, I find *Moses* and *Elias* appearing upon the mount with him, *Matt.* xvii. 3. Now these and the like instances are such arguments for the point I am considering, as amount to a sort of *a sensible demonstration*. Supposing the truth of scripture history, I have the same satisfaction that spirits exist separate from the body, and live in another world, as if I saw them descend from thence in their vehicles, or had myself been visited by some of my departed friends. Nay, the evidence here is stronger; for in the one case I might suspect delusion, which the testimony of scripture in these examples secures me from. O my soul! be established in the belief of this doctrine; here is sufficient proof of thine immortality, such as thou mayest rest in without fear of imposture. When the body dieth, the spirit dies not with it, but *returns to God*.

*A second Meditation on the Soul's
Immortality.*

As the spirit subsists after the death of the body, so I am here told it returns to God who gave it. How returns? What may this import?

1. It may imply, that the spirit *is from God* in a special sense; in a more immediate manner than the body is. Hence it is said, that *God gave it*; and elsewhere he is called, *the Father of Spirits*, Heb. xii. 9. (*i. e.*) by way of eminency and distinction.

2. It returns to God, (*viz.*) into his immediate presence: *Whilst at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 6. This body is, as a veil or covering, interposed between God and the soul, which hinders the perception and sight of God; but death draws aside the veil, and represents the divine Majesty to naked unbodied spirits, after a very different manner than before. Good men behold his face in righteousness, and see him as he is, in his pure and more immediate glory; not through a glass darkly, as now in the body, but face to face. Wicked men also, upon this return, behold in a full light what once they so little thought of; they find the scales fallen from their eyes, and see God in all his terrors. Now they are cured of their infidelity, and with the devils believe and tremble. *Fall on us, O ye rocks, say they, and hide us from the face of him that sits upon the throne.*

3. It returns to give an account: Here it is upon trial, and in a state of probation; at death,

it returns to render an account to its Creator and Lord ; an account how it used the body ; its senses, appetites, members ; how it acted in its several relations and capacities, during its abode in the body ; how it improved its time, talents, enjoyments, and opportunities of doing or getting good : In short, to give an account *of all the things done in the body* ; of its entire conduct towards God and man. O may I not mistake my great business, and *return, re infecta*, the work of life undone ! It would be better for me to be annihilated, sink into nothing, than see the face of my God, *and return to him*, having forgot my errand. O my soul ! labour that, whether present or absent, thou mayest be accepted of God : Assist me, Lord, by thy grace.

4. The spirit returns to God to be judged by him, and receive its sentence for eternity. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, saith the apostle, *that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. v. 10. Every one's state is determined immediately upon his dissolution : Not that he has then *the full retribution*, either in happiness or misery ; but the sentence is past, either of life or death, and that for ever ; which afterwards will be confirmed with the solemnity and awfulness of a future judgment. No sooner was the rich man in the parable dead, but *he lift up his eyes in torments* ; and when *Lazarus* died, he was immediately *carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*, Luke xvi. 22, 23. O may I stand in a good lot, may I find mercy at that day ! and when Christ, who is my life, shall appear, appear with him in glory.

The INSTRUCTION.

Applica-
tion.

1. **H**ow grateful and acceptable should this doctrine be to me? Did this life limit my duration, and bound my hopes, I might justly take up the psalmist's complaint, *Psal. lxxxix. 47. Remember how short my time is: Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? Few and evil, saith the good patriarch, are the years of my pilgrimage, Gen. xlvii. 9.* which is true of all mankind, *Job xiv. 1. Our duration here scarce deserves to be called life; it is a short something between being born and dying, passed over in the distributions of times and seasons to every purpose, Eccl. iii. 2. In the midst of life we are in death.* And as it is short, so it is troublesome, and often grievous. How full of labour are all things! How little to be attained here, worthy of the name of an happiness to a rational creature! If I taste of any enjoyment that seems agreeable, it hath so many allays, such a mixture of bitter ingredients in it, that it is hard to say, whether the good or evil of it be greater, which is most predominant.

Or if in any state and circumstances of things I find some little rest, something that looks like an happiness, such as it is, how transient, how changeable and short-lived? It may be, I have a few calm bright days, but then presently the clouds gather again, my horizon fills with darkness, and the comfortable scene is withdrawn: So that my life here, at best, is but a piece of chequered work, made up of intervals of pain and pleasure: To-day I put off my sackcloth, and gird me with gladness; to-morrow the sable

comes on again : And thus I go the round, tears and joy mutually succeeding. And how vain, how wretched a creature should I be, had I no future prospects ! And how cruel and inhuman the attempts of those, who would deprive me thereof ; who endeavour to degrade their own species, and set them upon a level with the beasts that perish ! One might say to them, as was said in another case, *Parcite, homunculi, unicæ spei totius humani generis* : Spare the only hopes of mankind. *But, O my soul ! come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.* Resolve, never to quit a doctrine that is the great support and * dignity of thy nature : Was it only probable, no wise man would willingly part with it ; much less, when it stands upon so sure a foundation.

2. This doctrine affords a proper relief against the fear of death. To die, what is that ? Only to leave the body, not to lose thy own being : It is to be set at liberty, released from thy bonds and fetters, discharged from thy prison, and properly to live. *Blessed are the dead :*

——*dicique beatus*

Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

Death is a passage to immortality, to happiness ; so that in this matter we *sorrow not as those that have no hope*, 1 Thess. iv. 13. and consequently should represent death to ourselves, not in the

* Si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro ; nec mihi nunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo extorqueri volo ; sin mortuus (ut minuti philosophi censent) nihil sentiam, non vereor, ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant. *Cic. de Senect.*

terrors of a destructive enemy, but as doing a kind office. *Pythagoras's* fancy of the transmigration of the soul (its passing at death into another body, and so enjoying life again), made his disciples fearless of dying : But here is firmer ground of courage and comfort ; not only *another*, but a *better* life in view, and a sure evidence concerning it. And how should this take off the dread of dying ? “ If to die,” saith *Socrates*, “ be to go to another place, and those “ who have departed this life are with God, “ what greater good can there be ?” He adds, “ For this I would willingly die over and over “ again.” O my soul ! learn to think of death with calmness and composure ; thou needest not, shouldest not, through fear of it, be all thy lifetime subject to bondage. The * philosopher says justly, Death is only terrible to them, *who with life lose all* : But this is not the Christian's case. Believe immortality, and fear not death.

In the mean time, 3. The comfort of this doctrine is confined. Immortality, or a future eternal existence after death, speaketh comfort to *some*, but not to *all* ; it is like the pillar of fire, and a cloud, that was light to *Israel*, but darkness to the *Egyptians* : To some it is as the savour of death, *viz.* to the ungodly, that have their hope and happiness in this life only. Did it only put an end to their present gratifications, it would be melancholy enough to them ; to have all their dreams vanish, their pleasing imaginations destroyed at once ; to be torn away from all their dear enjoyments for ever, is dismal

* Mors his terribilis, quorum cum vitâ omnia extinguuntur. Cicer.

and shocking. But this is not the worst of it : When the rich man, in the parable, died, his pomp and pleasure died with him ; no more purple and fine linen, no more sumptuous fare ; nay, not a drop of water to cool his tongue. But that is not all, *he was tormented in flame* : And thus it is with all that live as he did ; that believe not *Moses* and the prophets ; that neglect their souls and another world ; that spend their time in pomp and pleasure : Death is the *king of terrors to them*, it carries them *into utter darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

A third Meditation on the Immortality of the Soul.

4. IF the soul be immortal, I may hence learn how to rate and value things, *viz. by their reference to immortality.* I have two states of existence, or being ; one in the body, the other out of it ; one in time, the other in eternity ; one for a moment, the other for everlasting ; which affords a sure rule to direct me what to chuse, and what to prefer. It is plain, the things which are confined to my present state and duration, can be but of little account, *compared with the concerns of eternity.* Seneca Bates 122- contemplating the greatness and beauty of those mortal, orbs of light above, casts down his eyes to find of the out the earth, hardly visible at that distance, Soul, and breaks forth into a philosophical disdain : 280.
 “ Is it this to which the great designs and vast
 “ desires of men are confined ? Is it for this
 “ there is such disturbance of nations, wars,

“ and shedding of blood? O folly, O fury of
“ deceived men! to imagine great kingdoms
“ in the compass of an atom; to raise armies,
“ to divide a point of earth with their swords;
“ it is just as if the ants should conceive a field
“ to be several kingdoms, and fiercely contend
“ to enlarge their borders, and celebrate a
“ triumph in gaining a foot of earth, as a new
“ province to their empire.” And from hence
he excites men to ascend in their thoughts, and
take an intellectual possession of the material
heavens, as most worthy of their minds.
Earthly things are so little and mean, compared
with the things of the other world, that they
scarce deserve a solicitous thought, especially
when the inequality of our duration in this and
that world is considered. How justly does the
same philosopher elsewhere cry out, *Nisi ad
studium cœlestium homo admitteretur, non fuerit
operæ pretium nasci: O quam contempta res sit
homo, nisi supra humana se creaverit?* It would
not be worth while for a man to be born and
live, did he not study heavenly things: How
contemptible a thing is that which we call *man*,
unless he raise himself above earthly and bodily
enjoyments? O my soul! compare thy present
with thy future existence, and never call any
thing great and good, that reaches no further
than this moment of time, that will not accom-
pany thee into the other world, and has no con-
nection with immortality. *We look not*, says
the apostle, *at things which are seen, which are
temporal*, 2 Cor. iv. 18. They made them not
their scope, and indeed would scarce glance at
them, cast an eye upon them. The things which
are seen, the things of time, are but cyphers in

themselves; it is eternity, that like figures added to them, gives them their significancy and worth!

Consequently, 5. It is evident to a demonstration my chief concern ought to be about immortality, to secure the interest and welfare of the soul, the never dying part. I am directed not to *labour for the meat that perishes*; of which nature are all earthly things that go no further than the body. I ought to be indifferent about these things; my labour, my most earnest contention and care, is due to eternal things, the meat that endures to everlasting life. O may I always be affected towards *this* world, and *that* world, as the affairs of both require! May I consider and adjust their several claims and interests; love both according to their value and importance to me. This is a point of the greatest wisdom, a mistake in which is the main cause of ruin to those that perish. “ We should
 “ (says a divine author, arguing from the
 “ present doctrine) endeavour a calm indifferen-
 “ cy, and dispassionate temper of mind towards
 “ the various objects and affairs that belong to
 “ this life. There are very narrow limits set
 “ already by the nature of the things them-
 “ selves; and it is the part of wisdom and
 “ justice to set the proportionable bounds to all
 “ the thoughts, cares and passions we will
 “ suffer to stir in our minds, with reference to
 “ them. Nothing is a more acknowledged
 “ character of a fool, than, upon every slight
 “ occasion, to be in a transport; to be much
 “ taken with empty things betokens an empty
 “ Spirit; a rational authority, continency and
 “ dominion over one’s self, must be maintained,
 “ that we never be so affected with any thing,

Mr.
 Horæ’s
 Vanity
 of Man
 as mor-
 tal.

“ but the object may be able to justify and
“ warrant the affection : Consequently we shall
“ rarely meet with any temporal concern that
“ ought to move us ; both for the littleness of
“ such things themselves, and that we have so
“ unspeakably greater things in view. How
“ contemptibly should we look upon that empty
“ vanity, *being rich* ! The pursuit of so des-
“ picable a trifle, with violent and peremptory
“ desires, so as hereby to suffer a diversion
“ from our designs for another world, is to
“ make our eternal hopes less than nothing.
“ And with the like neglect should all sensual
“ pleasures, secular honours, dignities, &c. be
“ treated. We are to act with coolness and in-
“ difference as to all these things, and to mani-
“ fest it to all ; to declare it *plainly*, by a con-
“ stant uniform course of action, that we are
“ pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and are
“ seeking a better country.

“ That lofty soul, adds he, that bears about
“ with it the apprehension of being made for an
“ everlasting state, so earnestly intends it, that
“ it shall ever be a condescension and vouch-
“ safement with it, if it allow itself to take
“ notice what busy mortals are doing in their
“ (as they reckon them) grand negotiations
“ here below. *We of this Academy* (says the
“ philosopher to the jealous tyrant) *are not at*
“ *leisure to mind so mean things* (as the con-
“ cerns of his court). *We have something else to*
“ *do, than to talk of you.* With how much
“ more reason may the Christian say this ? He
“ hath still the image before his eye of this
“ world vanishing and passing away ; of the
“ other, with the everlasting concerns of
“ it, even now ready to take place, and fill up

“ all the stage.” O may the affairs of immortality thus fill my mind, and the affairs of this earth, of this $\tau\tilde{\epsilon}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\nu}$, this *short now*, and moment of life shrink, and lie as dust under my feet!

Nor is this to be looked upon as mere rhetoric, a flourish of words; it is no more than what a just comparison of time and eternity will admit and suggest. Suppose the present life and duration (consisting I will say of eighty years) divided into two periods; *into one month, and into seventy-nine years eleven months*: Suppose also the month was preparatory, and a sort of an introduction to the other period, when the whole state and circumstances should undergo a mighty change, and that according to our behaviour *in the month*? Who sees not the concerns of the *seventy-nine years* are greatest? Would not reason and common sense direct to prefer comfort and happiness, in that long duration, to every thing that might pretend to it in the foregoing month? Would it not be an excess of folly, and even madness, to pass the month in sport, in vanity and pleasures, or in little cares and business, *relating to that short space only*, while the other duration was neglected? (*i. e.*) to be happy for a month, at the hazard of being a slave and miserable for eighty years. Would not the month’s probationer, as I may call him, did he act with common prudence, have his chief reference to the after-period? Would he think of indulging his ease and pleasure, if this was like to entail misery upon him hereafter? Nay, would he not despise every thing of that kind? Especially when he considered, the more self-denied he was, the more diligent to improve in the month,

the more comfortable and happy he should be in the after-duration. This month, says he, will soon be over, and then I shall be happy, and enjoy myself for many years. O my soul! this is a faint resemblance of thy circumstances in life: Thou art here *a few days*, and eternity remains. Now is thy seed-time for everlasting: As thou sowest here, thou shalt reap hereafter. Look therefore to eternity, and be little concerned about the month, *this moment of time*; provide for everlasting: Remember *one thing is needful*; and put on the resolution of the pious martyr, who when he was bid to take care of himself, replied, *so I will of my best * self*, meaning the immortal soul.

The Soliloquy and Complaint.

BUT O my soul! how hast thou forgot thyself, forgot thy relation to eternity, thy future existence, and the concernments thereof? How unduly affected hast thou been towards this and the other world? How have the vanities and amusements of this short moment of being and duration, confined and engrossed thy thoughts and cares? Eternity is so awful a sound, that it should carry thy mind above the things of time, and quite drown the noise of them, as the report of a cannon doth that of a whisper. But alas! how much otherwise has it been, and is it with me? How have I wasted my affections upon present dreams and shadows, rejoicing and weeping over a clod of earth! Like the poor *Ephraimite*,

* Anima cujusque est quisque.

that cried after his *Teraphim*, *they have taken away my Gods*, saith he, *and what have I more?* Judg. xviii. 24. With what *ovation*, and sort of triumph, do we talk of what we call an estate? *My estate!* when in a map of the world it would scarce be discernible; one might cover it with a pin's head. I cannot but sometimes think with myself, how the *angels* pity us, and smile at us, when they look down upon our laborious and solicitous pursuits of such minute things. O wretch that I am! that my mind is so much depressed, and drawn down to this earth, that I can no better extend my views. Lord, anoint mine eyes with eye-salve; grant me that faith which is the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!*

The RESOLUTION.

AND am I immortal? Doth my Spirit at death *return to God*, and exist for ever in a separate state? I would henceforth resolve *to live for eternity*, to prepare for my *return*. In order to which I resolve (Lord, help me by thy grace) to have my eye fixed on the other world; and, in all my designs, undertakings and actions, to preserve a constant reference thither. I would esteem every thing as little, as nothing comparatively, that is calculated only for the meridian of time, that serveth only a present state. I resolve to chuse, prefer, pursue things, as they stand related to eternity, judging of them by this mark and property, *as they signify for another world, relate to eternity, and contribute to the blessedness of it*. I resolve not to look at the things that are *seen*, but at the things that

are *unscen* ; and what concerneth only the body and time, shall have little of my thought and care. O my soul ! thus I resolve. Lord, strengthen and confirm me by thy grace.

I resolve to be often *returning* before-hand to my God, resigning and committing my spirit to him, *to keep it against that day* ; keep it safe from the injuries, snares and temptations of its bodied state, and the impressions of sensible objects ; returning to him in a way of solemn devotion, delighting in him, conversing with him, comforting and refreshing myself in the best manner I can in his special presence ; that at my *last return* at death, I may not go to a God I have been estranged from.

Above all, I would resolve to get my heart framed and formed for a blessed immortality : I would make it the great business, and work of my religion and life, to cultivate and improve my mind, that I may be meet for paradise, meet for the happiness of the separate immortal state : particularly, I resolve to seek and endeavour after a weanedness from the body, “ a
 “ refinedness from this earth, a thorough
 “ purgation of all undue degrees of sensual
 “ affection ; a consumption of my dross by a
 “ sacred fire from heaven ; an aptitude to
 “ spiritual exercises and enjoyments ; high com-
 “ placency in God, fervent love ; a worshipping
 “ posture of soul, formed to the veneration of
 “ the eternal wisdom, goodness, power and
 “ holiness ; profound humility, and abnegation
 “ of self ; a prayerful frame of spirit, much
 “ used to gratulations and thanksgivings ; a
 “ large and universal love, imitating as much as
 “ possible, the divine love ; a steady composure
 “ and serene temper of spirit, not boisterous,

How Van-
 ity of
 Man as
 mortal.

“ nor apt to create storms to myself or the
“ world; every way suited to the blissful
“ regions, where nothing but perfect purity,
“ entire devotedness to God; love, goodness,
“ benignity, well-pleasedness, order and peace,
“ shall have place for ever. This, O my soul!
“ thou oughtest to be constantly intent upon;
“ this should be thy daily work (*vis.*) to get
“ thy spirit so attempered and fitted to heaven,
“ that if thou be asked what design thou drivest,
“ what thou art doing, thou mayest be able to
“ make this true answer, *thou art dressing for*
“ *eternity.*”

The ASPIRATION.

O MY God! the father of spirits, who hast formed and fashioned them, and hast the immediate conduct and government of them, visit this soul of mine; enlighten, purify, sanctify throughout; fit me for thine embraces; help me to breathe after immortality; to be separating myself more and more from this world and body; and more constantly to intend and seek the other world; to press towards it, and long for admission thither: I would be patient of the body; but not fond of it, considering *a good man should only need leave to die*. Lord, assist me, by thy grace, to attain this indifferency, to die daily, and to live for immortality. May I be trimming my lamps, adorning as a bride for a husband. I leave the worldling to pursue his dust, it is an intellectual spiritual treasure I would be ambitious of. O may I be arrayed in gold of Ophir! May I be all glorious within, and be brought to the King, at last, in raiment of needle-work; be cloathed with white raiment,

and I shall little regard other ornaments: Lord
for thee I wait:

*O come thou down to me,
Or take me up to thee.*

*A Meditation on the Resurrection of the
Just.*

A third specimen. **H**aving begged the divine presence, assistance and blessing, and chose some scripture, as the foundation of your discourse; as that *Luke xiv. 14. Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just*, you may proceed thus.
1. Say you, I will consider what I am to expect under the resurrection.

2. Take notice of the properties and qualities of the resurrection-body.

3. Review the grounds and principles upon which the doctrine stands, and consider the arguments by which the truth and certainty of it is established.

4. Apply all to myself.

1. I am to consider what I am to expect under the notion of a resurrection.

What is meant by the resurrection. First, At the resurrection, and as included in it, I expect *a body*. The *Anastasis*, or resurrection, implies more than the existence of the soul, and its life in a separate state: The literal and proper meaning of the word is *rising again*; which supposeth that something fell, which can be only the body. Hence it is said to be *of the dead*, *Matt. xxiii. 31. Acts xxiii. 6.* It is of those that were in the grave, *John v. 28.* Now the soul cannot be said to have died, or have been in the grave; consequently the resurrection

is of the body. And so the apostle intimates, *Rom. viii. 11. He shall quicken our mortal body; ζωοποιήσει*, he shall make it live again.

Secondly, as I expect a body, so I expect *the same body*, that my soul is now united to. *This corruptible*, says the apostle, *must put on incorruption*: This mortal (*τὸ φθαρτὸν τῆτο*) that same thing, that was corruptible and mortal, shall be raised, and be made incorruptible and immortal. To the same purpose, *Rom. viii. 23. We wait for the redemption of our bodies. So Phillip. iii. 21. He shall change our vile body.* We shall not have a body, but *our body*, our own body; this shall be redeemed from corruption, and changed; *the same temple* that was demolished, shall be reared up again. This is the doctrine of scripture, and accordingly the ancient Church*

* There were several in the primitive Church, that professed to believe the resurrection of the body, or of *a body*, but not of the *same body* which now we have; but instead thereof they imagined, that at the resurrection day there would be framed, by the power of God, thin, subtil, aerial bodies, whereunto human souls should be joined, in lieu of these gross material fleshly bodies, which they now actuate and inform: in opposition to whom the word *flesh* was inserted in the Creed, as being of a more determinate sense. The *Origenists*, saith *Jerome*, profess the belief of the future resurrection of the body, and because there are celestial and terrestrial bodies, and the air and aether, according to them, are called bodies, therefore they use the word *body*, and not *flesh*; and as this was a controversy at that time, so the Fathers are very express and distinct in declaring their faith, and maintaining what they took to be the Christian doctrine. *Rufinus* particularly (being, it seems, under some suspicion with reference to this point)—We confess, says he, that the resurrection of our flesh shall be whole and perfect, of *this our flesh*, wherein we now live; for we do not say, as some have slandered us, that another body shall rise instead of this, but that it shall be *this very same body*, without the loss of any of its members, or the defect of any part of the body, unto

*King on
the Creed,
p. 398,*

express their faith, *resurrectio carnis*; the resurrection of the flesh being an article in all their Creeds. So that there seems too much boldness in that of a philosophic writer.—“Suppose (says he) a person die in *England*, and be buried in one of our church-yards, and God should form him a body out of one of the mountains of *Peru*, it might properly be called a resurrection;” but methinks not *very properly*; a creation it might be called, but not a resurrection, which seems to include, in the notion of it, a renovation or restitution.

What identifies, or goes to constitute the same body, as the scripture has not told us, we

which nothing of its nature shall be wanting, except corruption: And agreeable hereto, in the *Aquilean* Creed, the article runs thus; I believe the resurrection *hujus carnis*, of *this flesh*. In another Creed (that of *Damasus*) it is thus expressed,—We believe we shall be raised with the same real members and flesh in which we now live. *Jerome* declares, that the Catholic faith cannot be maintained, unless it be admitted that a body with flesh and bones, blood and members, be restored. Another of these Creeds has it—We confess that, according to the example of our Head, there shall be a true resurrection of the flesh of all the dead; neither do we believe we shall rise in an aerial, or any other kind of body, as some have dreamed, but in the very

Vide Ho- flesh we now live in. Their design herein was to guard against
dy of Re- several opinions, which they apprehended inconsistent with the
sur. where doctrine of the resurrection, as 1. The opinion of those who
many ex- believed the soul should have *no body*, except some fine vehicle
amples of it might receive immediately upon its separation.

this kind 2. Of those that believed God would make it *a new body* out of
are col- other particles and other matter, an aerial or aethereal body.

3. Of those who believed the resurrection of the same body, but not of an *entire body*, with the same organs and members, with the same form and shape with the present body. Against all these they formed their article, and proceeded to settle and determine the faith (it may be with too much positiveness and nicety of decision, going further than they had clearness and warrant from scripture)

cannot pretend to be certain; and therefore with respect thereto, can have no determinate faith. Its *sameness* does not imply, that it shall have the same numerical particles of matter that *ever* it had in this life. In this sense our body is not the same in infancy, childhood, youth, and old age. It is in a constant flowing state, passeth away by insensible perspiration, and in the course of a few years (seven as many have computed) undergoes a change, receiving new flesh, and new particles of matter, at the revolution of so many years: and it is absurd to suppose, that these particles, that is, all the matter that constituted the body from our birth to our death, shall be reunited in the resurrection body.

Nor is it likely the body, when raised, shall have the same particles of matter (neither more nor less) which were laid in the grave. It is enough, says one, who has carried this point as far as most, that such particles are raised, as make up the integrant or necessary parts of the body; such as remain after the utmost degree of maceration, without which the body would be imperfect: And these necessary parts are chiefly the bones, skin, the nerves, tendons, ligaments, and the substance of the several vessels.

Others have thought that God will collect, out of all the particles that ever entered the composition of the human body, and belonged to it; collect *out of them all*, the matter of the resurrection-body: so that the more permanent and necessary parts of the body, which it had at death, and in some measure always had, and some flowing particles in every state of the body, and time of life; these collected by divine power shall constitute the body at the resurrec-

*Body on
the resur-
rection,
p. 188.*

tion. But I consider this and other* hypotheses of this kind only as speculation, and not propound them to myself as matter of faith. I would not pretend to be herein wise above what is written: as this doctrine depends entirely upon revelation, I would confine myself in all my reasonings, within the bounds and limits thereof. It is enough for me to know, that I shall have a body; a body, *in some respects*, the same; this the scripture sufficiently intimates, and I will depend on the promise and providence of God for performance.

3. At the resurrection, and as included therein, I expect the same spirit, in a state of union with the same body; that *this body* and *this soul* shall be again united in one person: It is no improper account of the matter, which a *Maimon*, learned Rabbi gives, when he calls the resurrection, “the return of the soul into the same body from which it had been separated.” Should my soul then receive another body, and

* The modern philosophers are of opinion, since the late microscopical discoveries, that as plants and herbs derive themselves from seeds, so animals proceed from proper animalcula, and they suppose the human body particularly one of the animalcula, grown and increased by the expansion of its numerous minute vessels. The solids, that were folded up in so small a compass, are swelled to the size they afterwards arrive at, by the addition made to the quantity of fluids, that pervade, and fill them. These solid or vascular parts are the *stamina vitæ*, and always the same; all the change is in the fluids, which are indeed in a perpetual flux, some constantly perspiring or passing, off by the secretory glands; but the main principles, the vessels of the body, are unchangeable in their substance through all the periods of human life, and the bodies of men are so distinct, that one cannot become a part of another, nor suffer any confusion: which being granted, the main difficulty that attends the doctrine of the resurrection vanishes.

not the same; or another spirit, and not the same, be united to my body, it would not be a proper resurrection.

4. The union being again accomplished, (the same body and soul joined in the same person) it shall be dissolved no more; I shall be unclothed no more for ever: *When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, &c. then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. The children of the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage; there is no need of marriage, to continue the species, or repair the loss of individuals, for death is now fully conquered; they die not, neither *can they die*, but are as the angels, *Luke xx. 35, 36. That building of God, that house, not made with hands* (that is, the resurrection-body, as some understand the text) *is eternal in the heavens*, 2 Cor. v. 1. And this is what I expect under the notion of a resurrection: I shall have *a body, the same body*; this in union with the same spirit; which union will be everlasting.

A Second Meditation on the RESURRECTION.

2. I AM to take notice of the properties and qualities of the resurrection-body: And here I am assured it shall not be such a body, as it is at present, but far more excellent: *He shall change our vile bodies*, says the Apostle, *and fashion them like his glorious body*, Phil. iii. 21. And what the glory of his body is, we may guess from that specimen, and faint resemblance of it

The properties of the resurrection body.

at his transfiguration; when *his face*, as we are told, did *shine as the sun*, and *his raiment was as white as the light*, Matt. xvii. 2. Our bodies shall, in their measure, be like his; *σύμορφον*, of the same form and complexion, appearing with a splendour and brightness, resembling that of his glorified body.

But what the change shall be, the apostle tells us more particularly, 1 Cor. xv. from ver. 35 to 45. He brings in the philosophic infidel, proposing his question, ver. 35. with design, it may be, to ridicule the doctrine: *But some will say, how are the dead raised up, with what body do they come?* He answers the scoffer with a severity, due to his temper, *thou fool, &c. q. d.* Thou thinkest to baffle a doctrine, that stands upon a sure foundation, by an objection, that may be answered from a most familiar instance, which every one is acquainted with; *Dost thou not know, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die;* suppose wheat or any other grain be sown, it must first die, that is, be separated and dissolved in the earth, and melted into a kind of jelly, before it springs up, and then God gives it a body, as he in his wisdom and providence sees fit; a stalk, an ear, &c. and to every seed its own body; to wheat one sort of stalk and ear, to barley another sort, and to each a proper body. He adds, ver. 42. where he begins to apply his simile to his present purpose, *so is the resurrection of the dead*, i. e. that case resembles this: As the seed sown is not exactly the same with what springs up; for a grain of wheat is the same with a stalk and ear of wheat, and yet it is partly the same; for every seed has its own and proper body given to it; if wheat be sown, it grows up wheat, not barley or rye; thus

it is in the case of the resurrection: *So also is the resurrection of the dead*, where there seems implied,

1. That our present body is a sort of a seed of the resurrection body. Whether the phrase concerning the body, *v. 42. (it is sown)* refers to its production into the world, or its being laid in the grave; the reference to the after-body is manifest; it is the seed and matter, out of which the resurrection body, as it were springs, and from which it is formed.

2. Here is implied that the resurrection body is in some respect the same with the body that is sown, (*i. e.*) the body which we now live in, and at death lay in the grave; for thus (in the simile) *God gives*, says the apostle, *to every seed its own body.*

3. Here is also implied, that it shall undergo a considerable change, and consequently, not be *absolutely the same*: It is so the same, as yet to admit of a difference; *that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body, that shall be*, *v. 37.* It is sown bare grain of wheat, &c. but when it springs up, it is variously changed; and thus it shall be with our body; it shall be changed, and wherein, he tells us in four particulars, *v. 42, 43, 44. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

1. *It is sown in corruption.* It is a perishing dying thing, having principles of death and corruption in it; therefore called by the apostle, *Rom. viii. 11. a mortal body*; and in this chapter, *1 Cor. xv. 54. this mortal*; its very principles tend to destruction; nor can it subsist without constant sustentation, and constant influence

from an agent and power without itself, to preserve it from the ruin its own principles would infer; but it shall be raised *in incorruption*, having no internal principles of death remaining; hence it is said of the children of the resurrection, that they *cannot die* any more, *Luke xx. 36.*

2. *It is sown in dishonour.* It is a vile body, *σῶμα ταπεινώσεως*, *Phil. iii. 21.* a body of *humiliation and abasement*, suited to the present lapsed state of the soul; it not only has, what the apostle calls, *uncomely parts*, *1 Cor. xii. 23.* but is subject to pains, weakness, and often humbled by deformity; we are forced at great expence to repair it, that it may be kept tenantable; to clothe and adorn it, that it may not offend; and no sooner is it deserted by the vital principle, but it becomes a loathsome carcase; *Let me bury my dead*, says *Abraham*, *out of my sight*: But it *is raised in glory*; hence at the resurrection the righteous *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever*, *Dan. xii. 3.* *They shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, *Matt. xii. 43.* Their body shall be a celestial body, having a brightness and lustre upon it, agreeable to its celestial state: Thus Christ shall transform it, when he raiseth it again, *according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things under himself*: Nor is it improbable that the glorified spirit, which returns to reside in it, will contribute something hereunto, and communicate a lustre to the body. “If,” says one, “our soul, when overjoyed, can fill our eyes with such sprightly flames, overspread our countenances, and paint our faces with such a serene and florid air, what a change will it make in our resurrection body; which being incomparably more

“ fine and subtile than this body, will be far more
“ pliable to the motions of the soul : When
“ therefore the happy soul shall receive the
“ raised, refined body, ravished with joy un-
“ speakable ; how will its active joys shine
“ through, and overspread it with an amiable
“ glory !”

When *Moses* had been with God in the mount, the rays of divine light and glory, that little taste of heaven, communicated by a short interview with the blessed God, made his face shine, and gave it so strong a lustre, that the children of Israel were dazzled with it, and so awed with those beams of majesty, that he was forced to veil his face, that they might behold it, and converse with him, as at other times, *Exod.* xxxiv. 30. Some have thought this glory continued on *Moses's* countenance till his death : That it continued a considerable time, is intimated, *v.* 34, 35. it is probable for half a year at least ; that is, till he had set up the tabernacle, and delivered the laws he had received : The like we read of *Stephen*, upon a special manifestation of God to him, *Acts* vi. 15. his body received some impressions of glory ; *his face shone as the face of an angel* : Now as this transformation was, I suppose, owing, in part at least, to the inward sensation, frame and temper of the mind, and not wholly to any external impressions on the body, it is reasonable to suppose a spirit returning from heaven, filled with the light and glory of that state, will more wonderfully transform. In short, I reckon the glory of the resurrection body will be affected by an immediate divine supernatural power, which the triumphant, joyous, happy state of the soul will contribute to.

3. It is sown *in weakness*, that is, in a condition of great frailty and infirmity; easily fatigued, soon wasted, decayed and spent: In the present state of our bodies, how little can we do! how little can we bear or suffer! We dwell in houses of *clay*, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth, Job iv. 19. but it is raised *in power*, full of life, vigour, and strength; so that it shall subsist for ever without decay; move for ever without weariness; fast and wake for ever without the demands of food and sleep: It will have a firmness and vivacity in it; such as will render it a fit instrument of a glorified spirit; strong enough to support its joys, and serve it in its operations: Heaven is a state of eternal uninterrupted religion; they rest not day and night, saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*, Rev. iv. 8. And they have bodies suited to their employment. How soon, alas! am I now weary in (if not of) the service of God: If I find the spirit willing, I soon find the flesh weak; I cannot watch with my Lord and Master a few hours, but this body begins to flag, to feel its burden, and succumb under it; I am forced to suspend operation, demand a pause, submit to a sort of death to recruit its strength, and restore its exhausted spirits: But the resurrection body will have no incumbrance of this kind; it will languish no more; be weary no more, but be raised *in power*, with life and activity; so as never to desert the soul in its most intense and vigorous exercises.

4. It is sown *a natural* or animal body (σωμα ψυχικόν), *i. e.* adapted to this lower sensitive animal life; sustained by meat, drink, and sleep, and constantly depending thereon; a body with

affections, passions, appetites, and inclinations, gross and sensual, and of the same kind with those of the brutes; on which account also it may be called *a vile body*, or a body of humbling: For how low do we often stoop to gratify the appetites of the body, and in compliance with its cravings? How wilt thou blush, O my soul! How wilt thou be ashamed, when out of the body, among the pure intelligences of the other state, to think to what mean drudgery thou didst once submit, when in the body, *serving divers lusts and pleasures*! How thou didst lay aside thy crown, forget the original dignity of thy nature; wast enslaved to sense and appetite, and transported with the entertainments of a brute.

But how happy the change that shall be made, when it is raised a *spiritual body*! refined from its grossness; when it shall have wholly laid aside the luggage, and burden of the flesh; shall need no more the recruits of food and sleep; crave no more the pleasures of sense, nor delude thee any more with those muddy delights, which the senses are the channels and instruments of. And then its constitution and frame will be spiritual, attempered and fitted to the divine, pure, spiritual operations of the soul; all its members will be instruments of righteousness: Thou wilt no longer, O my soul! complain of the law of the members warring against the law of the mind: The body thou shalt then receive will be in perfect subjection to the soul: It will no more pinion, divert, and tempt it, as it used to do, being improved into a sort of an angelic body: Not but, probably, we shall have more of body than the angels; but it is likely, our bodies will then resemble their vehicles, in

pureness, fineness, and activity : Hence the ancient Hebrews styled the resurrection body, *the angelical clothing of the soul* ; and *Tertullian* calls it, *Carnem angelificatam, angelized flesh* : Nor is this any objection against the resurrection body, it being the same with this body (that which is raised with that which is sown) ; for as philosophers agree, there is really no specific essential difference in matter, the grossest body in the world being capable of refinement to the subtilty of the purest æther ; so that our body may be the same, notwithstanding so great a change as to its quality, in order to fit it * for the state where it is. And this, O my soul ! will be the condition of the resurrection body ; this, or something like this : The trumpet shall sound ; the dead shall be raised, and we shall be *changed* ; changed with these and the like advantages and improvements : *This corruptible shall put on incorruption* ; be raised in glory, in power, and truly a spiritual body. And with what pleasure

* *Pamphilius* apologizing for *Origen*, produces several passages out of his works, to shew he believed the resurrection of the flesh, or of the same body, and among the rest what followeth ——— “ As we retain,” says he, “ the same body from
 “ our infancy to old age, though the characters may seem to
 “ be much altered, so we ought to understand that the very
 “ same species will remain in the life to come, though changed
 “ very much for the better ; for it is necessary, that the soul
 “ which dwells in corporeal places, should have such a body,
 “ as is suited to those places, where it lives ; and as if we were
 “ to live in the sea, our bodies would doubtless be so ordered
 “ and constituted, as is proper for such an habitation (as the
 “ bodies of those creatures are, which there inhabit) ; so now,
 “ since we are designed for a celestial habitation, it follows,
 “ that the qualities of our bodies shall be suited to the glory
 “ of those places, notwithstanding this, the former species
 “ will not be destroyed, though it be made more glorious.”

shouldest thou think of this blessed day ! with what solicitous care shouldest thou prepare for it ! Lord, grant me a part in the better resurrection !

A third Meditation, on the same Subject.

BUT is it certain, that I shall have my body ^{Proofs of} again, in this improved state ? Things of great ^{Resur-} moment, and that import a great deal of com- ^{rection.} fort, had need be well established : Let me therefore inquire, upon what foundation my faith herein stands ; though before I proceed, I shall premise two observations.

1. That this doctrine belongs not to the articles of natural religion : The philosophers of old, it is known, represented the Christian notion of the resurrection, as impossible and ridiculous, * *Augustin* tells us, there was nothing in the ^{* Enar-} whole Christian religion so vehemently opposed ^{nat. in} by them, as the resurrection of the flesh. Of ^{Ps. 98.} the immortality of the soul, says he, they have discoursed at large, and many of them assert it ; but when they come to speak of the resurrection, they not only contradict it, but maintain *it is impossible*. And this was so general among them, that *Tertullian* informs us, there was not one set of the philosophers, but what denied it. They did, says another, πάντι ἀντιστάσεως τρόπον, with all manner of opposition contend against it. *Pliny* * places it amongst the number of ^{* Nat.} impossibilities, viz. *revocare defunctos*, and boldly ^{Hist. lib.} affirms, it is what God neither *will do*, nor *can* ^{3. c. 7.} do. *Celsus* calls the doctrine *abominable*, and insults the Christians as madmen, for believing it. *Julian* the apostate attacks them with his usual raillery on this head. *Origen* says, that it was in his time the common subject of laughter

among the Pagans ; and I find, that when the great *apostle*, preaching at *Athens*, spoke of the resurrection of the dead, the *Epicureans* that heard him *mocked*, Acts xvii. 32. And in the same strain our modern deists talk of it. “ It is “ contrary,” say they, “ to all the principles of “ philosophy, that a body which has submitted “ to natural corruption, should resume its an- “ cient form.” So that it is plain, there is no learning this doctrine in the school of nature, or arguing it out by principles of reason : Natural reason can here do me no service ; it says nothing of it, unless in a way of objection and cavil ; and yet,

2dly. I find this doctrine has always been received in the church of God, and admitted as an article of their faith, under every dispensation of religion. The *patriarchs* * seem to have had some knowledge of it : Our Saviour includes it in the covenant made with them, *Exod.* iii. 6. compared with *Matt.* xxii. 32. And one would think *Abraham* was not ignorant of it, when he so readily complied with God’s command, to sacrifice his son, especially after what the apostle has added, *Heb.* xi. 19. that he *accounted that God was able to raise him from the dead*. *Job*, who lived in the patriarchal age, professed his faith on this head with great assurance, in those words (as many interpret) *Job* xix. 25, &c. *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, &c. I am sensible the text is very ambiguous, and has a differ-

* Dr. *Hody* has taken a great deal of pains, to prove, that the resurrection is an ancient universal doctrine, derived down from *Noah*, and grounded on the more early revelation made to the antediluvian patriarchs ; and that there were footsteps of it among the heathens (though it is manifest they were far from believing the scripture notion of it).

ent turn given to it; but if the doctrine was then revealed, it is not unreasonable to suppose this good man refers to it, when he speaks of his Redeemer, standing upon the earth, and that in the latter days, and of seeing him with his eyes: *In my flesh, says he, shall I see God, whom I shall behold, and not another (or not a stranger eye) intimating he should have the same body restored with the same eyes.* The vulgar Latin renders it, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at the last day I am to rise from the earth, and shall again be covered with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God.*

As for the Jewish church, it was certainly an article with them, that God would raise the dead. *Ezekiel* grounds his parable, concerning the resurrection of the dead and dry bones, upon the doctrine of a general resurrection; which must suppose it known and current among them, *Ezek. xxxvii.* That it was so in the time of the *Maccabees*, appears evidently from their history; hence we find the seven brethren, when put to death by the tyrant *Antiochus*, comforting themselves with the hope of it. *Thou, like a fury,* says one of them, when ready to expire, *takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life,* 2 Macc. vii. 9. Another, when he came to suffer, stretched out his hands, and said, *These I had from Heaven, and for his laws I despise them; and from him I hope to receive them again,* v. 11. The fourth at his death, cried out, *It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him; adding, as for the (meaning the king) thou shalt have no resurrection to life,* v. 14.*

* If any should suppose the historian is the author of these speeches, or at least gave a turn to them (as it must be granted

And when the last came to suffer, the mother exhorted to constancy, from the consideration of a happy resurrection, encouraging him with the hope and assurance thereof, as *Josephus* testifies: To which purpose she applied several texts of scripture, as *Prov.* iii. 18. *Wisdom is the tree of life to them that lay hold of her.* *Ezek.* xxxvii. 3. *Can these dry bones live?* Not omitting the saying of *Moses* in his song, often urged by the *Jews* as a proof of the resurrection, *Deut.* xxxii. 39. *I kill, and I make alive.* Thus, as the apostle says (referring, probably, to this very instance), they would not accept of deliverance, that they *might obtain a better resurrection.*

Nor did they, in their most degenerate state, part with this article (excepting a few that they counted heretics), as appears from the apostle *Paul's* apology before *Felix*, *I have hope towards God, as they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection, both of the just and unjust,* *Acts* xxiv. 15. And how readily does *Martha* profess her faith herein, when Christ told her, her brother should rise again! *I know,* says she, *he shall rise again at the resurrection of the last day,* *John* xi. 24. plainly implying, that this was the common faith of the *Jews*, which she had been trained up in. The modern *Jews*, notwithstanding their apostacy in other instances, still agree with their fore-fathers in this point: In their *Sepher Akkarim*, or book of fundamentals (which is their present creed, reduced into this method

is common in cases of the like nature), I answer, we have no certain proof of that; however it shews what the doctrine of the *Jews* was at that time, when this book was written; which some have thought was before Christ. It is certain it was ancient, being cited by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who lived at the end of the second century, and beginning of the third.

and order by *Maimonides*, about the end of the eleventh century), the thirteenth article runs thus: "I believe with a perfect faith, that the dead shall be restored to life, when it shall seem fit to God the Creator." And their story of the *devolution of the dead*, or rowling of the caverns*, is a sufficient evidence they believed a resurrection; it being an opinion and matter of belief with them, that the *Jews*, who are buried out of *Judea*, shall at the resurrection *pass through the caverns of the earth as far as Judea*, and there rise again.

What the faith of Christians is, and has been, touching this article, needs no inquiry; they have transcribed it out of the Bible into all their creeds, and other writings, where it stands ex-

* The *Chaldee Paraphrase* on the *Canticles*, chap. viii. 5. says, "When the dead shall revive, it shall come to pass that the mount of Olives shall be cleft, and all the dead of *Israel* shall come out from thence, and the just too, that died in the captivity, shall come by the way of the caverns under the earth, and shall come forth out of the mount of Olives." Which fiction of theirs (as ridiculous as it is) shews that they believed the resurrection of the body, and of the same body: They give it for a reason why *Jacob* and *Joseph*, who died in *Egypt*, were carried into *Canaan* to be buried there, viz. that they might be freed from the trouble of the caverns. And hence, to this day, the richest *Jews*, in what part soever they die, have their bones carried to the Holy Land. *Sandys* says in his travels, that whole barks full of bones are wont to arrive at *Joppa*, to be interred at *Jerusalem*. And *Thereno* † tells us, that the *Jews* who live at *Jerusalem*, give a chequer a day for permission to bury their dead in the valley of *Jehosaphat* that they may be the sooner dispatched in the day of judgment; which they believe will be held in that place: And the reason why they expect more dispatch, is because those who live at a greater distance must pass through the caverns, which will require time.

Hody.
p. 70.

† *Travels,*
Part 1.
p. 184.

Euseb.
l. 14.
c. 15.

pressed in the fullest terms. *Clement*, in his second epistle to the *Corinthians*, admonisheth them, that as in the flesh they were called, so in the flesh they should come, and in the flesh receive a reward. *Polycarp* thanks God, when he was bound to the stake, that he was to suffer martyrdom, and to partake of the cup of Christ, in order to the resurrection both of soul and body to everlasting life. And to the same purpose, *Justin Martyr*, *Tatian*, *Ireneus*, *Athenagoras*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Tertullian*, and most of the apologists and fathers. In the epistle of the churches of *Vienna* and *Lyons*, wrote about the year 177, to the churches of *Asia* and *Phrygia* (extant in *Eusebius*), they complain, “their persecutors would not suffer the bodies of their martyrs to be buried, but threw them to dogs to be devoured, and burnt them to ashes, and then cast their ashes into the river; and this,” say they, “they did, as if they could overcome God, and hinder their resurrection, through belief of which they despised the greatest torments.” So that it is evident this doctrine, however ridiculed by those without the church, was always heartily embraced by the members of it; Patriarchs, Jews, Christians. And I am now to see upon what foundation it stands, upon what principles they received it, for the assisting and strengthening my own faith.

And 1st, I have very express and clear testimonies of scripture to found my faith upon; which I am the more obliged to take notice of, because as this is a doctrine entirely depending on revelation, so I find the *Sadducees* heresy touching the resurrection, imputed by Christ himself to their ignorance of scripture. *Ye err,*

saith he, *not knowing the scripture, nor the power of God*, Matt. xxii. 29. *The power of God*, that he is able to do it : and the *scripture*, that he has declared he will do it. What intimations we have of it in the Old Testament, has been already observed : It was contained in God's covenant with *Abraham* and the patriarchs, *Exod.* iii. 6. *Job* is supposed to refer to it, chap. xix. 25. and the prophet *Ezekiel*, in his parable, chap. xxxvii. so the psalmist, *Psal.* xvii. ult. *When I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.* *Daniel* mentions it in express terms, chap. xii. 2. *And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.* In the New Testament the evidence is yet stronger and clearer ; our Saviour speaks of destroying *both body and soul in hell*, Matt. x. 28. of the *whole body being cast into hell*, ver. 29, 30. which supposes a resurrection : He assures us, *the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, &c.* John v. 28. *The dead in Christ shall rise* (first), says the apostle, *1 Thess.* iv. 6. *He shall change our vile body*, Phil. iii. 21. And again, *1 Cor.* xv. 52. *The dead shall be raised, incorruptible* : Indeed the whole chapter is employed in the same argument, in asserting and vindicating a future resurrection. And, to mention but one scripture more, in the vision *John* had of this great scene, it is said, *The sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them*, Rev. xx. 13.

And thus I have a sure word of prophecy to rely on : The Bible is the source of this doctrine ; there I am to seek it, and there I find it :

God, who best knows his own purpose and power, what he can do, and what he will do, has told me he will do this. May I resign to his authority! If any say, how can these things be? Can these dead and *dry bones live*? I may answer, with the prophet, *Lord, thou knowest*; thou knowest they can, and hast said they shall. Lord, I acquiesce in thy word, and wait for the accomplishment of it.

A fourth Meditation on the RESURRECTION.

NOR have I only the testimony of scripture in this case, which in so many words asserts there shall be a resurrection of the body; but several arguments there suggested, which confirm the same point: And these I shall briefly consider, and therefore add,

2dly. The resurrection of Christ proves the resurrection of believers; is a pledge and earnest of it: This the apostle warrants me to conclude, 1 Cor. xv. 13. *If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen.* And again, ver. 16. *If the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised.* He adds, ver. 20. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.* Where he refers to the law concerning the *first fruits*, Lev. xxiii. 9, 10, 11. When the *harvest was ripe*, they were to bring a *sheaf of the first fruits for a wave-offering*, with a *burnt-offering* at the same time: Nor might they eat *bread, parched corn, or green ears*, till they had made their *offering of first fruits*. But having done this as the law required, the whole mass and substance of the harvest was hallowed; this offering of first fruits being instead of all

the rest, to which that alludes, *Rom. xi. 16. If the first fruits be holy, the lump is holy* : Now with reference hereto, the apostle calls the resurrection of Christ the *first fruits* ; it having, as it were, hallowed the dead bodies of the saints, and consecrated them to a new life. He rose not only as *first* in order, but his resurrection was a representation and figure of ours ; shewed not only that it *might* be, but that it *should* be ; he rose as our head ; when his natural body was raised, the mystical was raised also ; “ by his resurrection he dissolved the tyranny of death,” saith one of the fathers, “ and raised the whole world (or church).” Which is no more than what the apostle intimates, *Eph. ii. 6. He has raised us up together with Christ* : He rose for us, went to heaven for us, as our *forerunner*, *Heb. vi. 20.*

So that according to the *apostle's* reasoning, the *future* resurrection of believers is as certain as the *past* resurrection of Christ ; *If Christ be risen, we shall rise* : The former of these is history, and fact ; and I have the authority of an inspired apostle thence to infer the other. And O ! my soul, what ground of faith, and even triumph, hast thou in this great event, the resurrection of thy Redeemer ! Behold here a type, an assuring pledge of thy own ! The same power that raised up him, will raise up thee ! Thy Saviour was dead, laid in a grave, locked up in a sepulchre, the door sealed and guarded, men and devils conspiring to detain him a prisoner there : But behold, he broke the bands of death, forced his way through all opposition, triumphed over the grave ! And thus shalt thou do in thy time and order : *Christ the first fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's.* He is the

first-born from the dead, Col. i. 18. And if he be the *first*, it implies that others shall follow; his brethren *shall be born after him*: And how securely mayest thou depend on the divine power for the accomplishment of thy hopes; when it is the power of thy redeemer and head, who *was himself dead, and is alive; and liveth for ever and ever*; and not only so, but *hath the keys of death and hades*, Rev. i. 18. He is Lord over the invisible world, over the grave; can, and will, command forth its prisoners: Yea, the thing is already *virtually done*, when he himself was raised up; so that *if I believe that Jesus died and rose again*, I may conclude, that *them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*, 1 Thess. iv. 14.

3dly. It is some confirmation of my faith, that my great Lord and master, the first-born from the dead, has given instances of his power, in the actual resurrection of some of his followers: We have several examples of the dead restored to life again, by the power of God, which may be looked upon as a specimen of the general resurrection, as the widow of *Sarepta's* son, 1 Kings xvii. 22. the *Shunamite's* son, 2 Kings iv. 34, 35. *Jairu's* daughter, Mark v. 22. the son of the widow of *Naim*, Luke vii. 11. *Lazarus*, John xi. 39. and *Tabitha*, Acts ix. 40. But as these persons rose only to a temporary life, as I suppose, and to die again, they may not be thought instances pertinent to our purpose, and therefore I shall not further insist upon them; (though they sufficiently demonstrate that the divine power can effect the reunion of soul and body, and seem to intimate God designs the dead shall have their bodies again, and live in them again). But that which

I would chiefly take notice of is, the resurrection of those saints at the time of Christ's resurrection, mentioned *Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.* It is said, *the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* Who they were that rose, the curiosity of some has disputed, though to little purpose. It has also been a question, whether they died again, or ascended with Christ? But leaving these speculations, I shall only observe, that it is certain some rose, rose with the same bodies, and therefore it is said, *the graves were opened, and they came forth*; which was after and upon the resurrection of Christ. Which I take to be an illustration of the apostle's doctrine before-mentioned: Christ rose as the first-fruits; now, as a token of the full harvest, in due time, behold some of his saints, his redeemed ones, presently follow him: He had conquered death, and he would have a few of his servants and members, as a pledge of what he designed for all the rest, share with him in the triumph. And O! my soul, here is further ground of assurance: Thou seest not only Christ the first-born, but others of thy brethren are risen; thou hast therein, as in a figure, thy own resurrection; dismiss, therefore, thy fears, thy jealousies; let thy *flesh rest in hope*, follow them that are gone before in faith and patience, and with them thou shalt inherit the promises.

4thly. I am allowed to argue a resurrection, from God's covenant with believers, and the relation they stand in to him. God is their God, *therefore* they shall rise; which is an inference my Saviour has taught me to make,

Matt. xxii. 32, 33. The covenant extends to the person, and secures the happiness of the whole man: If I can upon sure grounds claim an interest in God, as my Covenant-God, I may expect from thence a *complete* happiness; that my body shall not perish, but that, in my entire person, I shall see and enjoy God; partake of the blessedness of another state. Further, believers are members of Christ: They are under his headship, committed to his trust; and he hath told us, that *it is the father's will, that of all he has given him, he should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day*, John vi. 39. Not only no person, but no part of the person; and therefore he particularly takes notice, that that part, which seems now to be lost, really is not; *he will raise it up again.*

Further, believers are sons of God, and as such are children of the resurrection: Hence the *apostle* makes their adoption include in it the resurrection of the body, *Rom. viii. 23. Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* The sons of God shall have their full inheritance, all the felicity designed them: Nor indeed do they look like sons, whilst so dear a part of them, as their own body, lies rotting in the grave; therefore they are said to be *waiting for the adoption*, having not yet received the full privilege, dignity and glory of their state: In short, since they are sons, they shall rise again, their bodies be redeemed,

Once more, they are *temples of the Holy Ghost*; their bodies are so, 1 Cor. vi. 19. and can we imagine he will suffer his temple to be finally demolished! The apostle assure us he will not, *Rom. viii. 11. If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,*

he will quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Whereupon the Spirit is said to be the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. O my soul! secure thy relation to God, as his covenant-servant, his son, the temple of the Holy Ghost; receive and cherish the Spirit of grace; thou hast therein an assurance of a resurrection to life and glory.

5thly. The justice and equity of God's government affords a probable argument for the resurrection of the body: Not that the body is properly *guilty* or *rewardable*; the soul is the only intelligent, vital, active principle; but it acts in and by the body, and not without it: The soul designs, the body executes; the heart is the foundation of good or evil, but the tongue expresseth it, and the several senses variously minister thereto: Our members are, at least, *instruments of righteousness, or unrighteousness*, Rom. vi. 13. Accordingly, we are commanded to *yield them to God; and to glorify God in our body, as well as in our Spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. In short, *man*, as consisting of body and soul, is the subject of divine government; our actions, either of obedience or disobedience, are the actions of the *person*, not of the soul only; consequently the retribution shall be received in the entire person: God, that saw fit here to govern us in the body, will hereafter judge us in the body, 2 Cor. v. 10. which one of the ancients thought to carry so much equity* in

* Is it not absurd, says *Origen*, that the body, which bears the scars of wounds received for Christ's sake, and which, as well as the soul, endured cruel torments in persecutions,

it, that he scrupled not to pronounce, *Si non resurrectio, neque Deus neque providentia*: “If we deny a resurrection, we may as well deny both God and providence.” “The body,” says *Tertullian*, is the soul’s sister and co-heir, and therefore is to share with it in its estate.”

6thly. It is of some weight in the present argument, that I find good men in scripture referring to the resurrection, as the state of their consummate felicity, groaning after it, and longing for it: *I press forward*, says the apostle, *towards the mark of the high calling, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead*, Phil. iii. 11. and to the same purpose, 2 Cor. v. 2. *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven*: He adds, in the fifth verse, *he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit*. And again, Rom. viii. 23. *We, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies*. In both which texts these *suspiria sanctorum*, these ardent breathings of the saints, are ascribed to the holy Spirit: And is it to be imagined, that God will baffle the desires he hath excited in us, and disappoint the expectations his Spirit hath given us?

and suffered the punishments of bonds, imprisonments, &c. should be defrauded of the rewards due to it for so great sufferings? Does it not seem contrary to all reason, that the soul, which did not suffer *alone*, should be rewarded *alone*, and its vessel the body, which served it with so great labour, should obtain no reward?

7thly and lastly. The certainty of the resurrection may be argued from that salvation Christ is the author of, the great redemption he came to accomplish ; which, no doubt, extends to all the evils sin has brought us under : He shall *save his people from their sins*, Matt. i. 21. from sin, and from all the effects and fruits thereof ; from the first grand apostacy, with all its penalties ; from every curse, being *made a curse for us*. Now since death was the very evil and curse *most directly* threatened as the punishment of man's disobedience, *Gen. iii. 19.* it must be included in the redemption and deliverance we have by Christ ; and consequently, I may with great assurance expect from him a resurrection : So long as I remain in a state of separation, so long I am in a state of death, whatever my enjoyment and happiness may be in other respects : For what is death, but the separation of soul and body ? So long as I want this body, I have a mark of God's displeasure upon me, and of my apostacy ; I am bearing the punishment of my sin : Nor has my redeemer finished his office, and done the part of a perfect Saviour, till herein he has delivered me.

O my soul ! commit thyself into his hands ; *he is able to save to the uttermost*, finally and fully : *Though after thy skin worms destroy this body*, he will rescue thee from the power of the grave, and shew thee the path of life ; he must reign till *he has put down all enemies under his feet* ; all his enemies, and thy enemies, the enemies of thy salvation ; and then death itself, *the last enemy, shall be destroyed, be swallowed up in victory* : Thou must submit to the stroke of it, yield a while to this conqueror and tyrant ;

but thanks be to God, who will give thee the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Fifth Meditation upon the same
SUBJECT.

NOTWITHSTANDING such full and clear evidence for this doctrine, I am sensible it is not without its difficulties; it has been, and still is fiercely attacked, and the foundation of it struck at, by the adversaries of the Christian faith: The apostle met with some in his time, that thought it *incredible that God should raise the dead*; and many, in every age since, have been cavilling against it, and still continue to do so: Now as I would profess nothing as an article of faith, before I have tried it, nothing that cannot bear the severest examination; I shall here consider what is alleged by objectors. And,

(1.) Some pretend it is *impossible*: This was the cry of the ancient philosophers, as before hinted, and is taken by the deists of our own age: They tell us, that it is not consistent with the known rules of philosophy, for the body to rise: And further to incumber the doctrine,

Vid. Dr. they represent, “ that the particles of the
Nichol’s “ dissolved body are dispersed through the
Confer- “ world, evaporated into air; and which is
ence with “ more, the same matter has, in succession of
a Theist. “ time, composed, it may be, half a score
“ bodies: The herbage which grows from the
“ corruption of human bodies, is turned into
“ the nourishment of animals, and these animals
“ become the food of other men; sometimes
“ animals devour human flesh, and are them-
“ selves afterwards man’s food; as in the in-

“ stance of the *Roman*, who fed his fish with
“ the bodies of his slaves, that he threw into
“ his ponds : Now here the substance of one
“ man’s body becomes the substance of ano-
“ ther ; and consequently, each cannot have
“ their own, and the same body. And the ob-
“ jection they think yet stronger in the case of
“ *cannibals*, who live on the bodies of men.”

This is the objection in its utmost strength, and yet how little is there in it that need stagger the faith of a Christian, or that can render this doctrine unworthy of his belief? It might be enough to oppose to such cavillers, what our Saviour said to the Sadducees, *Matt.* xxii. 29. *They err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God :* But I shall speak a little more distinctly to it. And,

1st. Let me observe, that all the matter, which at any time composed the human body, is still in being ; *philosophy* will not allow, that the least particle of matter is annihilated ; there is the same matter now in the world, that there was at the first creation ; the particles that constituted *Adam’s* body, after all imaginable transmutations and changes, *still exist*, they still are somewhere.

2dly. Every particle of matter is under the eye of God, within the compass of his knowledge ; he numbers the *hairs of our head* ; he tells *the number of the stars*, and calls them by their names, *Psal.* cxlvii. 4. He measures *the waters in the hollow of his hand*, *metes out the heavens with a span*, and comprehends *the dust of the earth in a measure*, *Isai.* xl. 12. And why not the dust of our body also? Shall we not suppose this within his *ken*, and that however

dispersed, he knows where to find the particles thereof?

3dly. If the matter of our bodies still exist, and all the particles thereof be under the divine eye, is it any difficulty to suppose he can collect them and unite them? (*i. e.* so much of them as is necessary to this purpose.) They that deny this, must either maintain it implies a contradiction, (which the most resolute objector will never be able to shew :) or deny that God is Almighty; which is indeed to ungod him.

4thly. As an illustration of this doctrine, and a help to my faith, I would observe that God has displayed his power in a higher instance, and in a work of greater difficulty than the resurrection; I mean, *in creation*: He that believes the *heavens were formed by the word of the Lord, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth*; that he only *spake, and it was done*; *commanded, and it stood fast*; can never question the possibility of the resurrection; *i. e.* that God can effect it if he please. Nor is there any force or sense in the objection, that we cannot understand how it should be, that the same body, after all these (supposed) changes, should rise again; for is not God wiser than we? And cannot he *do exceeding abundantly above all that we can think, or conceive*? *Eph. iii. 20.* I might ask the objector, whether he can understand how *something was made out of nothing*? How a rib out of *Adam's* side made a woman? How the dust of the ground was at first formed into the body of a man, into flesh, skin, hair, bones, sinews, veins, arteries, &c.? Suppose one of us had been created just before the matter of the world, and had beheld that *chaos* mentioned *Gen. i. 2.*

without form, and void ; would it not have been as incredible, that from hence should have proceeded such a number of creatures, in different shapes, with variety of organs, voices, colours, &c. as incredible, I say, as any thing in the doctrine of the resurrection ? So that whatever others do, the Christian needs make no difficulty of this doctrine : Who can question the power of that God, who by his sovereign fiat and word made a world ; and particularly the curious machine of this human body out of the dust.

5thly. As to the objection that relates to the *cannibals*, &c. *viz.* “ that the substance of one man’s body becomes the substance of another,” the same answer is sufficient ; no particle of matter is lost, whatever changes it passes through : And God can make the separation, command back, and summon together what is necessary, in order to accomplish his own promise. Besides, (according to the observation of *Sanctorius*) not above a fiftieth part of what we eat turns to nourishment, (to which the liquids also contribute a considerable share,) and can be thought to incorporate with us : So that there are above forty-nine parts remaining, in the case here objected, to be the matter of the resurrection body. But I need not puzzle myself with intricacies of this nature ; I may here, with safety and honour too, retreat to the divine power : God can raise and restore the body, unite the scattered dust, and he has said he will ; and there I rest.

(2.) Some object against the resurrection of the same body, with the same members and parts, *that there will be no use of these members in the other state* : We shall, say they, have no occasion for such a body as we have now, why

therefore should we expect it? But this is no sufficient argument against our doctrine; for though the members and faculties of the resurrection body, shall not serve for the same purposes as at present, it doth not follow, it shall be raised without them: "Our Saviour's body, after his resurrection, had no need of nourishment; yet it was raised again with its natural instruments of eating and drinking; which he once actually used, to assure his disciples of the reality of his resurrection; and though these parts are now useless to him, as to that particular animal operation, his soul may use them for other purposes, to us unknown, and peculiar to his glorified state." My * author adds, "since Christ's glorious resurrection body is represented as the pattern of ours, (*Phil.* iii. 21.) we may infer, that ours shall rise, as his did, with all the parts of an human body;" though I presume it is not necessary to assert thus much; the doctrine of the resurrection, and identity, or sameness of the body, doth not require it: The members and senses of our present body are, no question, peculiarly adapted to our present state, both of operation and enjoyment: What change there may be in this respect hereafter, I know not (*i. e.*) whether we shall have all the same parts and members, and in the same form: This I leave among the secrets of the other world, not revealed in this; the body may be the same essentially, and in substance, notwithstanding any alteration in this and other instances.

* Dr.
Scot.

3dly. It is objected, that the body is so great a clog and burden to the soul, that it can be no advantage to us; no part of our happiness to receive it again, and therefore we have no reason

to desire it. The *philosophers*, especially the *Platonists*, used to represent it, in their discourses, as *the prison, the sepulchre of the mind*, and accordingly placed the chief felicity of man in a perfect freedom from all body, and all commerce with matter: But this objection is wholly grounded upon a mistake, as if the resurrection body should be like this present vile body of ours: Whereas it shall be changed, as the apostle assures us, 1 Cor. xv. 35, &c. It shall be raised *in power*, raised *a spiritual body*: If it was once a prison, it shall be turned into a palace; a glorious building of God! Such as the owner will return to, not only without reluctance, but with pleasure and triumph.

But (4thly). The apostle's authority is pretended against the resurrection of *the same body*. *Thou sowest not*, says he, *that body that shall be; God giveth it a body as pleaseth him*, 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38. I answer, the apostle speaks there directly of the grain of corn, sown in the earth; and his design is to illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection thereby, and to intimate, as the grain of corn, after it is dissolved in the ground, becomes by the power of God a stalk, ear, &c. so by the power of God also, this body of ours shall be restored, though changed and improved as there expressed: God gives to every seed *its own body*, though it is not bare grain (the individual seed as it was) that springs up: Our bodies will be the *same*; not absolutely the same; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; they shall be changed; God will give us a body *as pleaseth him*, as is intimated (in the *simile*) of the grain of corn; a body so improved and refined, as God shall appoint; but yet to every seed its *own body*: In short, as

the saints, that are alive at his coming shall be changed, but not lose their bodies, or have other bodies substituted in their room; so we have reason to think it shall be with the dead saints; both shall have their own bodies, but changed bodies. This the apostle signifieth, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. *Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; both the live and the dead shall have bodies, their own bodies; though both shall be changed and made incorruptible, that they may inherit the kingdom of God.*

And thus, O my soul! thou seest thy way clear; and the doctrine freed, in a good measure, from all difficulties; so that nothing remains, that need in the least disturb thy mind, or discourage thy faith: Say not, can these dry and dead bones live? Thy God knows they can, and has declared they shall: Dismiss therefore all suspicions; do not stagger at the promise through unbelief; but being strong in faith, give glory to God. *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.*

A sixth Meditation on the RESURRECTION.

Application.

And now, O my soul, improve this important doctrine for thy instruction, comfort, and quickening.

The INSTRUCTION.

AND (1.) I cannot but infer the excellency of the Christian religion, and the exceeding ad-

vantage and happiness of those that are called to the profession of it. The heathen world knew but little of a future state, of the soul's subsistence after this life, and nothing of a resurrection; nor indeed was it ever fully revealed, till the glorious Author of it *brought life and immortality to light by his gospel*. The church of old had some obscurer intimations of it; but we have, and *we only* have the doctrine in a distinct, clear light: We know more of the manner and circumstances of the resurrection; the nature of the resurrection body, than was ever revealed before. We know that we shall rise: How (in some measure); by whom: And to what! O my soul! bless God for that dispensation of light and grace thou art under; that thou art begotten again to a *lively* hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: Thou now seest, what many prophets and righteous men desired to see, and saw not: possess-est and enjoyest that day, which *Abraham* viewed at a distance, *afar off*, with so much pleasure; be thankful, that he, who hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of all men's habitations, hath cast thy lot under the gospel. *Constantine* thought it a greater honour to be a Christian, than a prince; a member of the church, than head of the empire. May I consider my high calling, and walk worthy thereof!

2dly. It is plain from this doctrine, that it is no reproach to a Christian, that he professes to believe the certainty and reality of some things, the *manner* and circumstances of which he doth not understand (though at the same time every one, that allows himself to consider, must grant, that where there is no distinct knowledge, there

is no distinct faith ; we neither know, nor believe without ideas, yet) ; we believe many things both as men and Christians, the particular mode, and precise nature of which, we are ignorant of : For instance, the resurrection. I know, and am assured the body shall be raised ; be changed, and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body : 'This in general I know ; but I do not know what this fully imports ; in what manner the dead shall be raised, nor (precisely) with what bodies they shall come ; and consequently cannot here pretend to any determinate explicit faith : So that, though I am to believe all God has revealed, I must not profess to know what he has not revealed ; and with the same modesty and caution, ought I to proceed, with reference to all other articles, especially of pure revelation : O my soul ! vail to the authority of God ; never question what God has said ; never dispute his veracity or power in any instance, with reference to this doctrine in particular ; because thou dost not understand how these things can be. In the mean time let revelation at once found and limit thy faith : Be not wise above what is written.

Sdly. I am hence enabled to account for that regard that has always, in the church of God, been had to the dead bodies of the saints : The solemnity of their interment, &c. I find *Abraham*, some thousand years ago, when a sojourner among the children of *Heth*, solicitous to procure a burying place for his family, and where particularly he might deposit the precious remains of pious *Sarah*, Gen. xxiii. *Devout men carried Stephen to his grave, and made great lamentation over him*, Acts viii. 2. *Dorcas's body was washed and laid in an upper room*, Acts ix,

37. which was according to the custom of the *Jews*, and other eastern nations. *Maimonides* saith, they not only washed the bodies of the dead, but anointed them with ointments, made of divers kinds of perfumes, and then wrapped them in clean linen: The like was practised among the primitive Christians, sometimes with no small cost, as *Tertullian* takes notice, in his apology: We are as liberal, says he, in expending the rich spices of the *Sabæans* on the bodies of our deceased brethren, as you (the heathens) are in your offerings to your Gods.

Now the design of all this was, as *Prudentius* tells us in his hymn upon the subject (*circa exequias defuncti*), to testify their belief of the resurrection of the dead: "Hence," saith * he, "it is that so much care is taken about sepulchres; hence the dead are washed, anointed, &c." He adds, "What mean these beautiful monuments, but to signify that what is committed to them is not dead, but sleepeth." And no question, if superstition be avoided, and we neither pervert the Christian doctrine with respect to the dead, nor ensnare the living, by any corrupt rites of our own devising, some so-

* Hinc maxima cura sepulchris,
 Impenditur; hinc resolutos
 Honor ultimus accipit artus,
 Et funeris ambitus ornat.
 Candore nitentia claro
 Prætendere lintea mos est,
 Aspersaq; Myrrha *Sabæo*
 Corpus medicamine servat:
 Quidnam sibi saxa cavata
 Quid pulchra volunt monumenta?
 Nisi quod res creditur illis
 Non mortua, sed data somno.

lemnity here is allowable : There is a regard due to the dead bodies, especially of such as die in the Lord ; they are temples of the Holy Ghost ; and though at present cast down, they shall be built up again, with far greater glory ; and therefore methinks, should be laid in the grave with some distinction ; and not as the beasts that perish : In short, we bury in hopes of a resurrection, and thereby declare and profess our faith in that doctrine.

And, O my soul ! improve occasions of this kind, as they offer, for the confirming thy faith, exercising thy hope, and other graces : When thou followest thy friend or neighbour to his * grave, employ thyself in some serious reflections, suitable to the subject then before thee ; think of thy own death and corruption, that this mournful solemnity will shortly be repeated with respect to thee : Put thyself in the stead of thy deceased acquaintance. “ What if it had
 “ been I ? Shortly it will be my turn, whether
 “ I die in my full strength, with my breasts
 “ full of milk, and my bones moistened with
 “ marrow, or die in the bitterness of my soul,
 “ when I can never eat with pleasure, I shall,
 “ however, lie down in the dust, and the worms
 “ shall cover me : But, O my soul ! there is
 “ hope in death ; this mortal shall put on im-

Pocok
 Port.
 Mos.

* The *Jews* are directed (in the office of mourners) when they look upon the graves of any of their nation, to offer up this prayer : “ Blessed be the Lord our God, who formed you
 “ with judgment, preserved you alive ; delivered you up to
 “ death ; who knows the number of you all ; who will raise
 “ you up again ; who will restore you with judgment : Bless-
 “ ed art thou, O Lord, who givest life to the dead : May the
 “ dead live, with my dead body may they rise again.”

“ mortality ; the trumpet shall sound, and the
 “ dead shall be raised incorruptible. O view
 “ the glorious scene ! Hark, that is the voice
 “ of the archangel ! Behold ! yonder he comes
 “ in the clouds ! ”

4thly. How glorious will the resurrection day be to good men ; and what an addition may then be expected to their former happiness ! There are many circumstances that will add to the solemnity and glory of it ; as the descent of Christ from heaven in flaming fire ; the voice of the archangel ; the trump of God, &c. which I shall not now insist upon. The restoration of the body, so changed and exalted, will, no doubt, be a mighty improvement of the happiness of the saints. Indeed I have, can have, but very imperfect ideas and notions of the resurrection body ; but I am assured it shall be glorious, be raised in glory ; though what that glory is, I can but guess at this distance. Some have thought that the body of *Adam*, in his original innocency and purity, was the model according to which the resurrection body shall be formed. “ I must own,” saith one, “ myself ^{body.}
 “ inclined to believe that our bodies, in the re-
 “ surrection (as to their purity, constitution,
 “ and liveliness) will be the same with that of
 “ *Adam*, when it first came out of the hand of
 “ God, with the stamps of divine wisdom and
 “ goodness fresh upon it : That was the true
 “ exemplar, original and pattern of human na-
 “ ture.” Nor will the glory of it herein (sup-
 pose it reach no farther) be inconsiderable ; especially if the conjecture of a late free and learned writer be admitted, *viz.* That our first
 parents were, as to their bodies, formed after
 the image of the *Shechinah*, which he makes to

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Fleming
Christol.
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be light, organised in human shape : He supposes, that besides the form, feature, and figure of man, they had a luminous vestment concreted with them, as their ornament and glory, the badge of their innocency, and ensign of their authority ; and that, when after the fall, it is said they were *naked*, the meaning is, they had lost this clothing of light and glory. But without laying stress on such speculations, I have assurance, that the resurrection body shall be glorious, exceeding glorious, even in fashion like Christ's glorious body. And O, what a day of glory will it be, when the saints, all the saints, shall appear thus arrayed ! with their bodies outshining the sun in the firmament ; with crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands !

No question, the saints will find themselves in a sort of a *new state* of happiness, when *now* they have received their bodies again, in so wonderful a condition ; and that in eternal indissoluble union with their spirit. “ The re-union of soul

* Sher. “ and body,” saith * one, “ will be an addition
 I ck on “ of happiness and glory ; for though we cannot
 Death, “ guess what the pleasures of glorified bodies
 1. 61. “ are, yet sure we cannot imagine that, when
 “ these earthly bodies are the instruments of so
 “ many pleasures, a spiritual and glorified body
 “ will be of no use : A soul and body cannot
 “ be vitally united, but there must be a sympathy between them, and they receive mutual
 “ impressions from each other ; and then we
 “ need not doubt, but such glorified bodies
 “ will highly minister, though in a way unknown to us, to the pleasures of a divine and
 “ perfect soul ; will infinitely more contribute
 “ to the pleasures of the mind, than these earthly bodies do to our sensual pleasures.” My

author adds, " Now will be the marriage of the
" Lamb ; this consummates our happiness,
" when the body and soul meet again in eternal
" harmony, to heighten and inflame each other's
" joys." This, and a great deal more, may be
expected to distinguish that day, and crown the
felicity of the saints. O my soul ! believe and
look for that blessed hope ; wait for that blessed
day, for the adoption, the redemption of thy
body ; rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

A seventh Meditation on the
RESURRECTION.

The CONSOLATION.

IN the mean time let the prospect of these things, of the glorious state of the resurrection body, support and comfort thee under all the exercises, troubles, and inconveniences of the present body ; *We that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened*, 2 Cor. v. 4. We groan and are burdened, and how many, how great our burdens ! The tabernacle itself is a burden, and the occasion not only of a great part of the sins, but of most of the sorrows of life ; it is a *vile body*, a body of abasement, *Phil.* iii. 21. *Flesh, in which dwells no good thing*, *Rom.* vii. 18. *A body of death*, v. 24. How much do we suffer, even good men themselves, by means of this body ! The best saints on earth know, and feel something of what the apostle complains of, and calls *a law in the members* warring against the law of the mind. Nor can they be delivered from this law, the taint and influence of the

body, till they are delivered out of it : Sin that *dwelleth in us*, has, like the leprosy under the law, so infected the house (the body) that there is no cure, till it is pulled down, and cast into a new mould : We groan in this tabernacle, and as long as we are in it we shall groan, and have cause to groan : But here is the consolation, that this vile body shall be changed. Shortly, O my soul, thou wilt have a new body ; a body in a new edition and state, without any pollution or corruption, in which there shall dwell *no evil thing* ; a pure, spiritual, refined body, that shall annoy and incommode thee no more ; of which thou shalt complain no more for ever ! O solace thyself in the hope thereof !

And here stand a little, and compare this body with that ; this vile body with the refined glorious resurrection body : Consider what the one is, and what the other will be : and let thy future prospects support thee under present grievances. This present body, it may be, is maimed, deformed, sown in dishonour (in that instance of it) ; but the resurrection body will have nothing of this : There shall be no imperfection, or superfluity remaining ; no distortion or irregularity of any kind, but an exact proportion and symmetry of parts. We shall be raised *in glory*.

Thy present body is liable to a variety of diseases ; is often a pained, languishing body ; so that sometimes, with the psalmist, *thou makest thy bed to swim, and waterest thy couch with tears* : Thou possessest months of vanity ; wearisome nights and days are appointed to thee. Nor is it only the uneasiness of such a state, but the diversion it gives from the work of religion, that is the great exercise of a devout mind ;

which is often like a skilful musician, who has broke his instrument. Well, at the resurrection this grievance will be over : The inhabitants of the new *Jerusalem* shall not say they are sick ; their bodies shall prosper and be in health, as their souls prosper : Every saint shall enjoy what the philosopher reckoned the greatest felicity man was capable of, *mens sana in corpore sano*, a sound mind in a sound and healthful body.

Thy present body is feeble and impotent, sown in weakness ; needs constant repairs by meat, drink, rest, diversion, &c. If we are vigorous in action for a few hours, we are soon weary ; the body is jaded, and we are forced to pause, take breath and seek recruits : Nay, must submit to die, as I may say, that is sleep, almost one half of our time, that we may, in our manner, live the other : But the resurrection body will have none of these infirmities ; will be set above the necessities and demands of this body ; we shall hunger and thirst no more, but remain in a condition of constant vigour, activity, and life. Hast thou, O my soul, tasted now and then of the pleasures of religion, found delights and entertainments, such as strangers intermeddle not with, in the more solemn exercises of the closet, assembly, &c. Alas ! it was but a taste ! Thy instrument would not serve long ; well, but hereafter things will be at a better pass with thee ; thy resurrection body will be more potent, be capable of the joys and work of heaven without fainting for ever.

Thy present body, how great a confinement to the soul ! what an incumbrance and clog to it ! It is really a diminution to these spirits of ours, that they are forced to act by the body ;

to keep its pace, and depend upon it in all their operations ; hence we are restrained, cramped, fettered ! What an impediment, for instance, is the body to us in our rational pursuits and acquisitions ! What slow advances do we make in knowledge ! How must we bend the faculties and tug at it, to furnish the mind with a few ideas and notions ; and when we have done so, how apt are we to lose them ! how hardly do we recover them, and bring them forth for present use ; and all this through the infirmity of the body, the condition of its organs, spirits, &c. And who feels not the clog and burden of the flesh ? How doth it at all times pinion us ! How doth it hang as a dead weight to the aspiring soul ! Well, at the resurrection this complaint also will be at an end ; the body I shall then receive, will neither hinder contemplation nor action ; it will have no gross fumes to cloud the mind, nor heaviness to depress it.

Once more, the present body is the soul's (not only prison, but) snare, tempting, deluding, enslaving to sense and sensible things : What dreams, shadows, vanities (sometimes grossly sensual and impure), do multitudes of poor unthinking creatures pursue and place their happiness in ! and this very much through the influence of the body : And even in good men, where the flesh is not the governing principle ; yet, alas ! how much do they suffer by the entanglements of the body ! How doth it divert the mind by its pleasures ; draw away the thoughts from more rational and divine subjects ! How doth it taint it by its imaginations, and distract it by its cares ! repeating its importunities, so that we are scarce at leisure to attend, either the work or the comforts of the

divine life. O my soul ! how art thou abased, humbled, and even made vile by this vile body ! Donot the *angels*, thinkest thou, regret to see one of their brother spirits, thus forgetting himself, pursuing a bubble, and triumphing in the pleasures of a brute (as is often thy case) ! Well, the resurrection body will have nothing of this nature in it : It will be of a purer constitution ; will have dropped all its passions, infirmities, and lusts ; will delude, tempt, ensnare no more : Those traces which sensible pleasures had imprinted, will be perfectly obliterated, and will give no more disturbance ; there will be no longer a law in the members thwarting the superior law of the mind : Now the flesh lusteth against the spirit ; the wheels of this noble machine are sometimes disordered ; hereafter they will move regularly, and in entire obedience to the intelligence that governs them. In short, there will be full concord between soul and body ; all harmony within ; no more rebellion or disorder for ever. O blessedness ! joyful day ! Lord, I wait for thy salvation ! I must submit to the abasements of my present body for a time ; would endeavour to bear its burdens, strive against its affections and lusts (help me by thy grace) ! But, blessed be God, that as I look for new heavens, and a new earth, so a new body wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The eighth Meditation on the
RESURRECTION.

The RESOLUTION.

MAY I be found prepared for this solemn, awful day! The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, the dead universally: *All that are in the graves shall come forth*, John v. 28, 29. *There shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust*, Acts xxiv. 15. But this is so far from being a comfort to wicked men, that it will be their aversion and dread: The resurrection, with respect to them, is like a gaol delivery (as we call an assize), when the unhappy prisoners are brought forth to execution. *They shall awake*, but it is *to everlasting shame and contempt*, Dan. xii. 2. Their bodies, it may be, will rise more gross and material than the bodies of the saints, and, no doubt, appear with extraordinary marks of horror upon them: And O! with what reluctancy will they be dragged to them, and receive them again; the very sight of which will powerfully revive the memory of former things; and union with them, will be like chaining a murderer to the dead body he has slain. *Christ*, it is true, will raise them; but it is as a judge; they *shall hear his voice*, and obey his summons, *and come forth to the resurrection of damnation*, John v. 29. The resurrection will be their punishment, not their privilege.

And hence it is, I suppose, that the resurrection is so often mentioned in scripture *as of good men*; as if none but they were to rise, as *Luke* xiv. 14. *1 Cor.* xv. *Rom.* viii. 11. Intimating,

that it is matter of hope and advantage *only to these* : Others shall be raised, but against their will : They would be glad never more to see bodies again ; be glad the rocks and mountains should fall upon them. O my soul ! endeavour that thou mayest stand in a good lot at that day ; so act in the body, that thou mayest not be ashamed or afraid to meet it again : O how important a concern is this ! Lord ! help me to attend to it. I know, as *Martha* said of her brother *Lazarus*, that I shall rise at the resurrection at the last day. But shall I rise to life ? Let this, O my soul, be thy inquiry and thy care : and accordingly lay down proper measures ; fix thy purposes, and resolve to pursue them. Particularly I would resolve (Lord, help me by thy grace !)

To endeavour after the principles and the improvement of a spiritual and divine life ; such is the depravity of human nature, that we are said to be *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. 5. Not that we are in a strict sense, and without a metaphor, dead ; we have natural life, and (what I may call) intellectual life remaining. We have the use of our senses, reason, judgment, and all our faculties ; but we have lost our rectitude, integrity, purity ; our taste, savour, and relish of divine things ; lost a disposition and tendency of soul God-wards, and are become earthly, sensual enemies to God in our very minds, and in short, reprobate to every good work. This is our natural death-state, out of which there must be a revival, a resurrection ; or death will finally triumph over us. *You hath he quickened.—Except ye be born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, John iii. 3. *The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, must*

make us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. For to be carnally minded (to be under the power and influence of fleshly principles) is death; it argues a state of spiritual death; and will issue in eternal death. Every true and sincere Christian is a partaker of *a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, 2 Pet. i. 4.* O my soul! secure this great point, aspire after higher and higher attainments in the spiritual and divine life. I may here borrow and apply that (Rev. xx. 6.) *blessed are they that have part in the first resurrection, over them the second death has no power:* Lord, quicken me by thy grace, raise me up together with Christ: Without the first resurrection in this sense, I shall neither escape the second death, nor partake of the future glorious life; but if my soul now live by the grace and power of God, soul and body shall hereafter live by the same grace and power.

I would resolve to secure mine interest in the divine covenant and favour: I desire to yield myself to God, and my members instruments of righteousness to him; to present my body, my entire person, soul and body, a living sacrifice to God, to be his only, entirely, and for ever. I would chuse God as my God, my felicity and all; as my Sovereign whose will shall rule me, whose wisdom shall direct me; as my portion, whose goodness shall sustain and satisfy me. Lord, in thy favour is life! I would accept of Christ in his mediation; subject myself to him as my Lord, depend on him as my Saviour, and on the Spirit as *Paraclete*: I would accept, renounce, resign, according to the tenor of the covenant. O my soul! adjust and settle this momentous affair: If God be my co-

venant God and Father, I shall live, live eternally; my body shall rise to life and glory; so my Saviour himself has taught me to expect, *Matt. xxii. 31, 32.* Lord, be my God, say thou art my God, and it is enough: help me to chuse thee, and rest in thee as such, and thou wilt be my salvation.

I would also resolve to consecrate my body as *a temple of the Holy Ghost* (so, in unspeakable condescension, the bodies of believers are called, *1 Cor. vi. 19.*); Lord, come and take possession fuller possession of me by thy Spirit: O prepare thyself an habitation; fit me for thy presence, and vouchsafe (O infinite grace!) to *dwell in me*: Set open, O my soul! the everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in: And if the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in thee, he that raised up Jesus from the dead, will quicken thy mortal body, by his Spirit, that dwelleth in thee.

I would also endeavour (Lord, help me by thy grace) to use this body as an holy, consecrated thing, and as expecting its after-glorious restoration. Lord! may I never defile thy temple; may I possess my vessel in sanctification and honour; may holiness to the Lord be inscribed on every member. O my soul! learn so to govern and use thy body, that thou mayest hope to return to it with comfort. Beg, not only that thou mayest be sanctified throughout, both in body, soul, and spirit; but that all may *be preserved blameless, to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *1 Thess. v. 23.* Labour to cleanse and purify the body more and more; to keep it under, and bring it into subjection; that it may neither so much cloud the mind, nor so strongly tempt it, as it often doth. If we *mortify the*

deeds of the body, we shall live, Rom. viii. 13.

Sherlock
on death,
p. 65.

“ Holiness is the only principle of immortality, both to soul and body ; those love their bodies best ; those honour them most, who make them instruments of virtue ; who endeavour to refine and spiritualize them, and leave nothing of fleshly appetites and inclinations in them : All the severities of mortification, abstinence from bodily pleasures, watchings, fastings, hard lodging, &c. when they are instruments of real virtue, and not the arts of superstition ; when they are intended to subdue our lusts, and not to purchase a liberty of sinning, are the most real expressions of honour and respect to these bodies ; this is offering up our bodies as living sacrifices ; and such sacrifices shall live for ever ; and the less of flesh they carry to the grave with them, the more glorious will they rise again.” O my soul ! herein exercise thyself ; to subjugate the senses and sensual inclinations. Think how inglorious it is, that this noble, divine inhabitant (the immortal spirit) should serve the vile body, fulfil its lusts, and be lacquey to the brute. The philosopher could say, he is unworthy of the name of a man, that would live one day in bodily pleasures ; and how much more unworthy is he of the name of a Christian, whose professed business it is to prepare for a glorious resurrection, and a future immortality ! We should be withdrawing and weaning from the body, as much as we can ; this becomes us both as leaving it, as we soon must, and as expecting it again in a new form and state. It is said of *Plotinus*, that he blushed, and was ashamed to be found in the body. *Antoninus* calls death the deliverance of the soul

from the impressions of sense, the tyrannies of the passions, the errors of the mind, and the servitude and drudgeries of the body. O my soul! learn of *Pagans*, how to esteem and employ the body; be not fond of it; fond of its pleasures, of its vain titillations; but labour to live above it; to govern and keep it under, in a state of subjection and subserviency to the mind; Consecrate it wholly to thy God, and therein to immortality.

The ASPIRATION and PRAYER.

O MY God! wilt thou assist me in this great and difficult work? I apply myself to thee, from whom cometh my help: To thee, O Lord, my strength and my salvation: Confirm me more and more in the belief of this important article; help me to look for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable to his death: O that I may press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling; if by any means (help me to use all proper means, and to use them with suitable zeal and diligence) I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. May I overcome evil habits, slothfulness, love of ease, and all bodily pleasures: May I subdue the flesh, its inclinations, undue desires and appetites; keep under my body, and bring it into more present subjection to the mind. Lord, strengthen me for this warfare; strengthen me by thy Spirit with might in the inner man. Many are the trials, temptations, and dangers of this bodied state.

I commit my Spirit to thy tuition and defence ; fortify it against the impressions of sense, and sensible things ; the snares and entanglements of the flesh ; help me to strive for mastery, and be temperate in all things. O may I not miss the recompense at the resurrection of the just : May the sound of the last trumpet be a joyful sound to me, a jubilee proclaiming my release, and beginning a new triumph ; and when Christ, who is my life, shall appear, may I appear with him in glory, and so be for ever with the Lord.

A Meditation on the final State of
HAPPINESS.

HAVING prepared yourself as before, by a short ejaculation for the divine assistance, set yourself as in the presence of God to consider and survey the great subject proposed, *the happiness of heaven* : Your text may be, 2 Cor. xii. 2. 4. *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth ; such a one caught up to the third heaven ; and I knew such a man, whether in the body, &c. how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter* : where, say you, I have to consider

1st. The person concerned in this matter ; *I knew a man in Christ*, meaning himself ; otherwise the mention of it here would not have been to his purpose ; which was to support his credit, with the wavering *Corinthians*, and baffle the pretences of such as endeavoured to undermine his reputation with them ; none of whom had

been caught up to the third heaven, as he intimates he himself was.

2dly. The time of this rapture, and the visions and revelations that ensued; in general *above fourteen years ago*; that is above fourteen years before he wrote this epistle. Some refer it to the time of his conversion; when he was struck from heaven, in so extraordinary a manner, and brought to the foot of Christ, with a *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* In which posture of abasement and self-annihilation, as I may call it, *he continued three days and three nights at Damascus, and did neither eat nor drink*, Acts ix. 9. And it is supposed, that during this space, he had the rapture here mentioned; but whether this be so or not, it is not improbable that now it was that, as he tells us, *he was taught the gospel by the revelation of Jesus Christ*, Gal. i. 12. If he was not now taken up to heaven, he had a great deal of heaven communicated to him; *Damascus* was his best school, there he received his instructions, far more to his advantage, than all he had learnt at the feet of *Gamaliel*: And though it is granted this was an instance of extraordinary grace, yet God still exerciseth his sovereignty over the hearts of men as he pleaseth, and sometimes in a manner not unlike what we here read: He can enlighten, form, and frame them, to answer his own purposes, by his special, powerful influences; can subdue a proud *pharisee*, change his heart and temper, remove all prejudices, lay him in the dust, and turn him into another sort of a creature, and *this in an instant*: Lord, may I be as effectually taught to know thee, and myself; taught thy gospel! I would be content to have

the eyes of the body shut, that the eyes of the mind may be more opened.

3dly. The rapture itself, with some circumstances relating to it; as (1.) the place he was caught up to (*viz.*) *the third heaven*, v. 2. and into *paradise*, v. 4, whether *paradise* and the third heaven be the same place, or different, is disputed *; but as the debate is not of any

* Dr. *Whitby* delivers it, not only as his opinion, but the opinion of all the ancients, that the third heaven and paradise are different places: * And Bishop *Bull*, in his discourse of *the middle state of happiness or misery*, has taken a great deal of pains to defend this notion: He makes *paradise* the receptacle of holy souls, immediately upon the dissolution of the body; and the *third heaven* he makes the higher state of happiness, they are advanced to, after the resurrection. And speaking of the rapture in this text, he observes, that the *apostle* had represented to him, *first*, the most perfect joys of the third heaven: But lest so long an expectation should discourage him, he saw also the intermediate joys of *paradise*. But methinks it is an objection against this notion, not easily to be got over, that we find the same *apostle* declaring his expectation, and confidence of being with Christ *immediately* upon his death. *I desire to depart, and to be with Christ*, Phil. i. 23. Now should it be granted that Christ, when he died upon the cross, passed into *paradise*, in the sense of these authors, *i. e.* into *hades*, or the supposed region of bliss for separate souls: Yet after his resurrection, we are assured he went to the right hand of God; *he ascended far above all heavens*, Eph. iv. 10. We must therefore either say, (1st,) that the *apostle* was mistaken in his expectation or hope: Or (2dly,) that the privilege of being with Christ, at death, was peculiar to him; for which there is not the least reason; not to say that elsewhere he mentions it, as the common privilege of believers. 2 Cor. v. 8. *We are willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord*: Or (3dly,) that there is no intermediate *hades*, or *paradise* distinct from heaven. The *apostle* expected after his dissolution and death to be where Christ is (*i. e.*) in heaven; in a state of blessedness, indifferently called *paradise*, or the third heaven; though differing, no doubt, from the final state of happiness, after the resurrection.

great importance, so not so suitable to my present design. I cannot question but there will be a considerable change made in the state of heaven after the resurrection; but that there are two distinct states of blessedness *at present*, paradise and heaven, is a supposition not so well supported, as some may imagine.

2dly. What he met with there; *he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*, Ἀρρητα ῥήματα, words he *could* not, or *might* not utter. I cannot but observe, that when it is said, *he was caught up to the third heaven*; there is no mention of what he heard or saw; which it is not so probable would have been wholly passed over in silence, if it was another place distinct from *paradise*, and the more glorious.

3dly. The effect this wonderful sight had upon him; the surprize of which was such, that he knew not whether he was in the body, or out of it, *i. e.* whether his Spirit was separated from the body, and taken up to *paradise*, or he was carried up soul and body together: This he knew not, he says: And how then should we know it? Or why should we enquire after it? Who can tell us, if the *apostle* could not himself tell? It is like he was so ravished with the unspeakable words, the glories of *paradise*, with the company that assisted his passage thither, and entertained him there, that he quite forgot the body. Some on earth have felt a little of this; even when there has been no proper extasy or rapture: Spiritual things have so engaged their attention, arrested their minds, and filled their faculties, as to raise them above the body, and the little concerns thereof. Of how great account ordinarily is this body with us?

How many can relish nothing without it ; value nothing above it, or besides it ? But the words of *paradise*, the purer delights of that state, were we better acquainted with them ; did we taste and relish them, as even at present we might, would diminish the sense of these lower enjoyments ; would drown the noise of earthly things, and bring the body into a just neglect with us.

But I shall take a nearer and closer view of the words, in which I observe two things. (1st,) The reality and certainty of a future state : Here is even a sensible evidence of it : For behold one *caught up to paradise*. (2dly,) Some intimation of the nature of that state, *viz.* a state of delight and pleasure, hence called *paradise* *, in allusion to the ancient *paradise*,

* The word *paradise* comes originally from the Hebrew *pardes* ; which signifies an orchard or garden : It is used three times in the *Old Testament*, and always in this sense : The Greek *παράδεισος* is of the same signification, literally importing a garden, and more strictly a garden of delights. Hence what *Moses* in the *Hebrew* calls *Gan Eden*, a garden of pleasure ; the Greek version of the *LXX.* calls *paradise* : And from hence, in the *New Testament*, it is borrowed to express the state of future happiness ; as *Luke* xxiii. 43. *2 Cor.* xii. 4. *Rev.* ii. 7. Nor were the *Jews* unacquainted with this notion of *paradise* ; they often speak of an inferior and superior (the earthly and celestial) *paradise* ; which the *cabalists*, according to their manner of spelling mysteries out of scripture, think were represented by God's putting *Adam* into the garden of *Eden*, at two several times, *Gen.* ii. 8. 15. The earthly *paradise* being a place of great delight and felicity, they made it an emblem of the place and state of happiness in the other world : Hence it is used to be the solemn wish of the *Jews* concerning their dear friend, *let his soul be gathered into the garden of Eden* : And in their prayers for a dying person they used to say, *let him have his portion in paradise*.

or garden of *Eden*, which was the seat and residence of innocent *Adam*. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the midst of the paradise of God*, Rev. ii. 7. *i. e.* He shall partake of the comforts and pleasures of heaven, figured by the tree of life in the earthly *paradise*. Heaven is the true *paradise*; there is the life and blessedness, which the garden of *Eden*, and its symbolical tree, were only types of.

In my farther meditation upon this subject I shall (1.) premise a few things concerning this state in general. (2.) Enquire into the happiness of it; into the particular pleasures that constitute *paradise*. (3.) Prove there is such a state. (4.) Make application to myself.

(1.) I shall premise a few things concerning this state, in general: As (1st) that there is a state of happiness, that good men enter upon, *immediately* after death: *I desire to depart*, says the apostle, *and be with Christ*, Phil. i. 23. *When Lazarus died, he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*, Luke xvi. Which must imply, that he was in a state of happiness, whatever be the special, precise meaning of the phrase; and therefore it is said he was *comforted*, v. 25. Notwithstanding.

2dly. The pleasures of *paradise* are not complete, till after the resurrection and future judgment: Then it is that the servants of Christ most fully *enter into the joy of their Lord*, Matt. xxv. 21. Then the *crown* of life is given them, 2 Tim. iv. 8. *i. e.* They then receive their more perfect joy, and final crown: They have not before been openly acquitted and owned: They wanted their body, and so far were suffering the penalty of the apostacy. In short, they have

not, till then, the happiness of the entire person ; and, consequently not an entire happiness : So that the most perfect state of the heavenly *paradise* will be after the resurrection ; not but that departed souls are happy before ; but not fully happy : Then heaven will be most eminently a *paradise*.

3dly. Let me farther premise, though I am sure *paradise* is a state of great delights and happiness ; yet I can form but very imperfect notions of it at present : *It does not yet appear what we shall be*, 1 John iii. 2. As the new heavens of the gospel state were represented to the *Jews* by various types ; so the future heaven is represented to us Christians by sundry metaphors ; in which, as was said of their law, *Heb. x. 1.* we have only the *shadow of good things to come, and not the very substance of the things themselves*. We are not, whilst in the body, capable of taking in a clear, distinct account of heaven : However, God has seen fit, in some measure, to vail and cover it from us. The apostle in *paradise* heard unspeakable words ; words, which it was not lawful to utter : He learnt more by that view of heaven than he had leave to communicate to the church on earth ; and, it is probable, more than any language he could use was able to communicate. That world is very much to us, *Terra incognita*, an unknown country ; the glory of it is *yet to be revealed*, 1 Pet. iv. 13. Particularly we know not, nor are we able to form any conception of the matter, how the soul acts during the intermediate state, when out of the body, and deprived of its present instruments and organs*. We understand not

* “ We know not how the soul *perceives*, when out of the body ; whether by the help of some new subtiler organs

how we can see without an eye, hear without an ear, reason without a brain, &c. We know not what the resurrection body will be; what members it shall have, and what will be the use of them; what difference there will be in the manner of the soul's operation, in the separate state, whilst without a body, and in the final state, when again united to one. We know but very imperfectly how we shall be employed in *paradise*; what worship we shall perform; and how it will be performed. We know not particularly what intercourse and converse there is among the saints in the other world; much less how it is carried on; how they express their sentiments, and communicate their thoughts one to another. We know not what the beatific vision means, so much spoken of among us, and wherein so much of heaven is supposed to

“ and instruments, fitted to its present state; which, either
 “ by its own native power given it in creation, it forms to
 “ itself, or by a special act of the divine power it is supplied
 “ with; or whether it perceives and acts without them. Nor
 “ is this strange; for now we can scarce explain how we see
 “ or hear, how we think or understand, least of all how we
 “ remember, though we have continual experience of all these
 “ operations in ourselves.” (*Bull. Important points of primitive Christianity. vol. 1. p. 87.*) I mention not this, as if it was, with me, any difficulty to believe the soul can act without the body: It is really a greater difficulty (setting aside experience) to believe, and to account for its union with the body, and acting by it, than its subsisting and acting in a separate state. How pure a spirit can unite with matter, and by a single act of the will move the hand, foot, or any member; command the whole body; use its organs and spirits in its operations, is all mystery, and unintelligible; only we know by experience it is so: And as we know *by revelation it shall act without the body*; it is no objection against it, that at present we understand not how.

consist : *We shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. But we must see him, before we know what it is thus to see him. We know not the place of heaven, know not where *paradise* is, nor whether it be the same now as after the resurrection : These, and a great deal more, are among the *Ἀρρήτα ῥήματα*, the secrets of the heavenly state. Learn therefore, O my soul ! to think and speak thereof with caution and reserve ; do not irreverently tear aside the vail, and intrude into things thou hast not seen.

I will only add (4thly) that which is *certain* concerning heaven is its *general nature*. It is represented in scripture by a variety of metaphors ; as a city ; a kingdom ; a crown ; a crown of life ; everlasting life ; the joy of our Lord ; *paradise*, &c. All which import the same thing ; (though they give different views of it, and shew it in a different light,) *viz.* That it is *a state of happiness*, of honour, preferment, and comfort ; a state of *exceeding great happiness* : The several phrases intimate this, and so we are assured elsewhere : *In thy presence is fulness of joy*, Psal. xvi. ult. Nay, it is a state of *complete happiness*, especially after the resurrection ; *the spirits of just men are made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. They are perfect in their natures, and perfect in their enjoyments : Their desires are filled and answered ; they need, they crave no more, *when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness*, Psal. xvii. ult. This is the scripture account of heaven, and what we may assuredly depend upon : *It is a state of happiness, of great and perfect happiness.*

A second Meditation of HEAVEN.

BUT though this be what is most certain, and what the scripture *more clearly* reveals, with reference to the future state of blessedness; heaven or *paradise* : Yet it gives several hints and intimations farther concerning its more *particular nature* ; and consequently warrants and encourages my farther searches into it. I shall not therefore take up with this short and general account ; but under the conduct of divine revelation, the only sure rule in this case, I shall proceed to the next thing proposed, *viz.*

2dly. To inquire into the happiness, or blessedness of *paradise* ; into the pleasures that constitute heaven, and make it a *paradise* : And in general two things are manifestly included in it : *The removal of all evil, the presence and confluence of all good*, of every suitable good, that concerns the felicity and perfection of a rational, immortal Spirit : Both these are essential to happiness. Every degree of evil is, so far, a diminution of happiness : Whilst I suffer any positive evil, or want any suitable good, I am proportionably not happy. So that, as heaven is a *paradise*, a state of perfect blessedness, it supposes, and includes both these ; the absence of all that may be called evil, and presence of every proper good. *There is no evil and all good.*

(1.) *Paradise* (the happiness of that state) includes and supposes the absence of all evil. Our apostacy from God let in a flood of misery, which has overflowed our world : That sentence pronounced in case of disobedience, lies upon

mankind, *Gen. ii. 17.* *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die :* Die, (*i. e.*) thou shalt lose thy comforts, and commence miserable. And though the divine mercy and grace interposed and saved us from the execution of the sentence in its full latitude and extent, yet it did not wholly remove it ; and therefore we find, after the promised deliverance by the *seed of the woman*, *Gen. iii. 15.* the sentence, in part, still stands in force, as what was to take place against the offenders : The serpent, the woman, the man, the earth, all are cursed, *v. 16, 17, 18, 19.* This is the case of mankind since the fall : He is under a curse, in a sort of a *death state*. He is not only liable to a natural death, which he must unavoidably undergo ; but there is a vanity and disappointment in all his enjoyments ; and a great variety of sorrows and sufferings that attend him, and follow him, through his whole life and course.

(2.) There is a vanity and disappointment in all his enjoyments ; the curse is, in this sense, universal ; it reaches every person, *Job xiv. 1.* Every condition, rich and poor, *Psal. lxii. 9.* Every age, childhood and youth, *Eccles. xi. 10.* Every state, *Psal. xxxix. 5.* This every one feels, and the longer he lives in the world, the fuller his conviction of it. Vanity and a curse has seized all our comforts ; mixes with them, and, like a worm, smites the gourd of our present happiness, that it withereth. I dare appeal to the experience of mankind, on this head : Let *Solomon* speak for them ; who after he had tried all conclusions, and had endeavoured to extract the quintessence out of every enjoyment ; had gratified himself with mirth ; wine, women, stately buildings, vineyards, or-

chards, gardens, pools of water, a great retinue, men-singers, women-singers, instruments of music, the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces; the delights of the sons of men. In short, *whatever his eyes desired, he kept not from them; he withheld not his heart from any joy*, Eccles. ii. 1. 10. *After this experiment; I say, after he had, like the laborious bee, searched every flower, he stands still, as it were, makes a review, and gives his judgment of all, v. 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and all the labour I had laboured to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of Spirit, and there was no profit under the sun: And what can a man do that cometh after the king? Here was a concurrence of circumstances that promised as fair for happiness as could be expected; a largeness of soul, a fulness of earthly delights, and a designed resolute improvement of all these advantages, in order to happiness: And behold the result and issue; the curse follows the inquirer! and he is forced to pronounce all is vanity, and vexation of spirit. He found what he himself declares elsewhere, that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.*

This, O my soul! is the condition of things here below; with thyself, with the whole human race: We may promise ourselves rest, contentment, happiness in this or the other state; but it is all delusion and cheat: Riches, honour, beauty, relations, friends, all say it is not in us. No, there is a kind of *death* that runs through all, blasts all. We are condemned to *eat our bread in the sweat of our face*, Gen. iii. 19. Condemned to labour and toil (some in one way, and some in another); and while we do so, the curse flows down upon us, often prevents the

success, and destroys the comfort of our labour ; takes the sweetness out of every fruition, and leaves it a *caput mortuum*, a dead, insipid, spiritless thing ! Thus the world has found it, in all past ages. I lay no stress upon the fable some report, that as soon as *Adam* had sinned, he was visited with a *phthisis*, or inward consumption, of which he all along languished, and at last died. But it is certain a woful *phthisis* has invaded his posterity ; they have lain under the sentence of death, of vanity, and a curse for some thousand years. Farther,

2dly. He is not only not happy, but really miserable, exposed to sorrows and sufferings innumerable. Could one view and behold the inhabitants of this world at once, what a scene of distress would appear ? How great a part should we see lying in sackcloth, and bathing in tears ? Some afflicted in their bodies, others in their minds, others in their estates, names, relations, and some in all : Sometimes a cloud hangs over the house, which is often discharging itself, and then gathers again. The relations in which we promise ourselves the greatest comfort, prove the greatest cross. *I am weary of my life*, saith *Rachel*, *because of the daughters of Heth, her son's wives*. Gen. xxvii. 46. A prudent *Abigail* hath a churlish *Nabal*, as the companion and trial of her life : An holy *Job* has one in his bosom to wound and tempt him. This child is a *miser*, that a *prodigal*, this a *fool*, that a *rake* : And what with one, and what with another, how often are the thoughtful parents grey hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave ! O the grievances, vexations, and troubles of the present state ! Who can number them ? *All our days are passed away in thy*

wrath, Psal. xc. 9. We generally come weeping into the world, and in a great measure go weeping through it : And though the passage is but short, (the cradle stands near the grave) yet sometimes we are ready to think it tedious ; *are weary with our groaning*.

Nor is this death, curse, vanity, and misery confined to the enjoyments of this life, the things of this present world ; but extends itself to religion, to our spiritual negotiations and intercourse. Our apostacy has tainted the mind ; death has seized our faculties, and very much disabled them for their proper functions, for divine exercises ; which is true in a lower degree of good men, as well as others. They find reason to complain of *a law in their members warring against the law in their mind ; of a body of sin and death*. Religion is become a *warfare*, *a fight* ; and cannot be carried on without striving, watching, difficulty, and continual returns of labour and pains : And after all, how frequent our disappointments and miscarriages ? There is a languor and faintness in our devotion, an iniquity in our holy things, an imperfection in our best services. So that even in this state, in this best state, in our religious capacity, we are still vanity, altogether vanity : Indeed here is our chief solace, our great relief under the other troubles of life ; and yet *even here* we are not without our troubles and exercises : If without are fightings, *within* are fears ; the frame often disordered ; the soul disinclined ; the mind clouded ; the heart dead, deceitful, treacherous ; the affections tainted, earthly, sensual. O wretched man, who shall deliver ! This is thy condition in the present world ; this the curse

that lies upon thee, the vanity and death that pursues thee.

Well, in *paradise* ! O grateful sound ! blessed news ! There shall be a deliverance ; a full, entire, eternal deliverance from all this ! *They rest from their labours*, Rev. xiv. 13. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes : *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away*, Rev. xxi. 4. Former grievances, troublesome exercises, both of body and mind ; all sorrows and sufferings, all kinds and degrees thereof shall cease for ever ! Sin shall be fully pardoned, and all the effects of it abolished ; *there shall be no more curse*, Rev. xxii. 3. This, O my soul ! is heaven ; and how comfortable, how glorious a state ! How amiable an idea doth it give thee of it ! even this alone, was there nothing farther to be expected, is almost enough to make it a *paradise*, and recommend it to thy affection and choice : That flood of tears, which sometimes follows the Christian to the very gates of heaven, shall then bid him farewell for ever ; and nothing remain of them but a grateful *remembrance to enhance the pleasures of the deliverance. This, O my soul ! is *paradise* : It is supposed to it, included in it, and justly may be esteemed as part of its happiness : After thou hast been tossed with sorrows and tempests, thou shalt there find a quiet harbour, and everlasting rest !

* *Olim
meminisse
jurabit.*

A third Meditation of HEAVEN.

2dly. As there is the absence of all evil, so the presence and confluence of all good. Heaven is a state of delight and pleasures, as the word *paradise* imports? What these are, I am now to inquire: What the pleasures, that constitute *paradise*. And

1st, There is the *pleasure of the place*; which though it be not among the principal ingredients of after-happiness, is however of some consideration. It is the *New Jerusalem*, the palace of the great King; the city of the living God; a lively description of which we have, *Rev. xxi.* Its wall is said to be *great and high*: It has *twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels*: The dimensions of it *twelve thousand furlongs*; the *building of the wall of jasper, and the city pure gold, like unto clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation jasper; the second sapphire; the third a chalcedony; the fourth an emerald, &c.* Now though this may more immediately, and directly refer to some more glorious state of the church on earth; yet I reckon it is described in terms borrowed from the triumphant church, to which they more peculiarly agree; especially when it is said of this city, that *nothing there enters that defileth*, v. 27. and that it hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, adding, *the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Heaven seems to be ultimately meant, which is called a city, and a *city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, Heb. xi.

10. *Where* the place of *paradise* or heaven is, we know not, nor do we know what it is ; only we may conclude, it will be a place of great glory and magnificence, suitable to the presence that fills it, and the inhabitants that possess it : This the metaphors in general import. Nor is it unlikely there will be a *visible Shechinah* ; some outward sensible display and manifestation of God, such as was frequently seen in the tabernacle and temple of old, and upon the mount of transfiguration : *The glory of God doth lighten it*, v. 23.

And, O my soul ! how great a pleasure will it afford, not only to behold, but dwell in this glory ! *When the queen of Sheba saw the grandeur and magnificence of Solomon's court, the house he had built, his furniture, retinue, &c.* she was so surprised, that it is said she had no spirit left in her, 1 Kings x. 4, 5, &c. *Happy are these thy servants*, saith she, *that stand continually before thee*, v. 8. But how much greater entertainment may we expect the New Jerusalem will afford ! What a *paradise* will that be, where is the throne of God and the Lamb ! where the divine Majesty appears in the fullest light, and where his glory dwells !

2dly. There is *the pleasure of the company* : It is a most glorious place, and will be suitably replenished : In *paradise* is *the general assembly, the church of the first-born, an innumerable company of angels*, &c. Heb. xii. 23. There we shall sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* ; with all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, in the kingdom of God : And O ! the ravishing delights of such a society ! What sweet counsel will the saints take together ! How will they mingle hearts and affections !

What pleasant lectures will they read on the several providences they passed through which concerned the church and themselves more particularly ! We shall probably hear *Moses* and *Elias* (who talked with Christ in his transfiguration), hear *Noah*, *David*, and others reporting, with admirable divine comments, the history of their own lives and experiences.

Nor will the *angels*, we may suppose, refuse to admit us to the intimacies of their converse : We shall, it is likely, have the honour and satisfaction of discoursing with them about their embassies into our world ; hear from them the particular services they did us, in the course of their ministry towards us : How, at such a time, they were sent to succour, support, deliver, to admonish of danger, suggest advice, &c. And O ! the heaven of this ! It is a sort of heaven to think of it at a distance. *Socrates* comforted himself when he came to die, with the consideration that he should go to *Homer*, *Hesiod*, and other brave men, whom their character had endeared to him. So * *Tully*, *O præclarum diem*, * De secte. &c. "Oblessed day," saith he, "when I shall go
 " to the assembly and congregation of divine
 " souls, and particularly," as he adds, " to my
 " *Cato* ; when I shall depart from this puddle
 " of mankind to such a society !" But how much more excellent and glorious the *cætus fidelium*, the college of Christians ? How much greater the satisfaction it will afford ! especially if it be considered, that as they are *all* saints, so they are *altogether* saints : Saints in their complete perfect state ; free of all infirmity ; among whom there will be no shyness, distance ; no pride or selfishness ; no vanity, passion ; no remaining corruption to alienate minds, or taint

their converse. This, O my soul ! thou mayest expect in heaven : This will be one of the pleasures of *paradise*. At death thou shalt be gathered into *Abraham's* bosom, and live in eternal communion, in delightful, mutual embraces with all the saints.

3dly. There is *the pleasure of the inward state*, viz. a state of consummate grace, and full conformity to God. *The spirits of just men are made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. Not that we shall be absolutely, and in every respect *like* God. It were blasphemy to suppose that. As none is good but God, so strictly speaking none is holy, just, or perfect, but God. The excellencies of the highest angels are below, even infinitely below those of the divine mind. Nor will all the saints have the same degrees of perfection in heaven ; *as one star differeth from another star in glory*, so do the saints in their resurrection state, and consequent blessedness. Their advancement and happiness hereafter will, I doubt not, be different, according to their different improvements in grace, holiness, and usefulness in this world.

Nor is it likely their perfection will be *simul et semel* *, all at once. God is infinite, absolutely perfect, and incapable of addition and improvement : But it is not reasonable to think

* Since the writing of this, the pious and ingenious Mr. *Watts* has published some curious and entertaining thoughts upon the saints perfection in the other world, and has offered very probable reasons to prove that it admits of advances and increase ; to whom I refer the reader for farther satisfaction on this head, and on other subjects touched in the present discourse.

the saints, even in *paradise*, are so ; that they *immediately* arrive at the highest pitch of their attainments : It is not likely they shall know as much of God and his works, the very moment or hour they are admitted to *paradise*, as they will do, after they have been contemplating the glorious objects that surround them myriads of years : They will learn the song of *Zion* better, understand the hallelujahs of heaven better, when they have been for ages employed therein, than at first. By beholding the blessed God they will be more enlightened, more impressed ; have their hearts more enlarged, and be proportionably filled. This I apprehend to be the case, not asserting that it is, only supposing that it may.

In the mean time, every saint in heaven is perfect and happy ; perfectly happy, *Heb. xii. 23.* Their desires are bounded and satisfied, so as neither to grudge another's portion, nor aspire with uneasiness after an higher station. *In thy presence is fullness of joy, Psal xvi. ult.* This the lowest saint in heaven finds : He is satisfied, each one is satisfied with the divine likeness.

In short the souls of good men in the heavenly *paradise*, shall be changed and transformed into as great a resemblance of God, as their full happiness requires. *The new man is now renewed after the image of him that created him, Col. iii. 10.* That is the pattern and exemplar. But alas ! how far do we fall short thereof ! The divine work, at present, is at best but a rough draught, that has little of the beauties of the original : But in *paradise* it shall be finished ; there shall be an entire rectitude of mind ; every faculty be suitably adorned, and the whole soul

shine with all the lustre and brightness of the divine image.

Particularly (just to glance at a subject copious enough to fill a volume) our knowledge will then be perfect (in the sense mentioned); we shall be ignorant of nothing that it is fit for us to know, and that concerns our happiness. All those sublime and more difficult points of revelation and faith, which now puzzle and divide learned men, shall be cleared up, so far as we have any interest in them: And no question, we shall wonder at our former ignorance, and much more at our former rashness and presumption. Our knowledge shall be extensive; we shall know God in his nature, works, providences: The meanest saint will be able then to philosophize, far above the greatest *adept* in the present state: And then this knowledge will be clear, distinct, easy, by *intuition*, as it were.

As we now know but little, so it is at great expence that we know what we do. We first receive certain principles, which are as the foundations of knowledge; and from thence, by very tedious, laborious, and often very uncertain conclusions, we proceed to other truths that we apprehend connected with them. And thus, by degrees, we acquire a small stock, which we set up with, and have the vanity to call wisdom, learning, *profound learning*! though in reality it is little better than a collection of blunders, compared with the light of the other world: heaven is the region of light, pure unclouded light; there is neither labour nor mistake attending their inquiries. "The saints will then," as one speaks, "have their vestment of light, " upon as cheap terms as the lilies their orna-

“ ments : *And yet Solomon, in all his glory of*
“ wisdom and understanding, *was not arrayed*
“ *like one of t' em.*”

And as knowledge, so love, humility, meekness, subjection, resignation, delight, joy, and every other grace will then be perfected. There is every grace without any mixture, any thing of the contrary alloy : *The king's daughter is all glorious within.* There the spouse shall answer that character without a figure, or any abatement in the interpretation, *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee,* Cant. iv. 7. Here, in our best strains, we are but *pressing towards the mark.* Our most lively, successful endeavours in religion, are but a vigorous effort to throw off a dead weight, and a burden of corruption ; which, alas ! still cleaves to us. In *paradise* this struggle will be over ; we shall then have attained full perfection, entire happiness. This, O my soul ! is heaven ; this is part of the pleasure of *paradise.* Thou wilt then view thyself in all the accomplishments of the divine image.

4thly. There is *the pleasure of the frame,* consequent upon the former. The heart will be always in tune, every faculty in its due state and posture : There will be no jar and confusion within ; no rebellion in the inferior, against the superior powers ; but the whole soul so disposed, as it ought to be, towards God, itself, and towards others : Never disturbed with any corruptions, hurried with any passions ; no more clouds in the mind, or tumult in the affections ; but an entire, perfect rectitude, as is implied in what was said before. And who can estimate the pleasure, the joy, and even triumph, that flows from hence ?

Take an improved Christian in his best frame,

when most serious, solemn, and devout; the heart enlarged, following hard after God, the affections set on things above, raised to the highest pitch he ever attains; corruptions, for the present, still, and laid dead at his foot; and suppose this frame to continue for a day, or a week: Such a one, for the time, would have a little heaven of it: would really know more of heaven, have a more sensible idea of *paradise*, than the most artful description in the world could convey to him: And such a frame, in its perfection, and made unchangeable, is the very heaven I am inquiring after. This, O my soul! is *paradise*. Here thou wilt find a full pleasure, an entire acquiescence and rest; beyond which thou wilt need, or desire no more. Now thou wilt be filled with that *righteousness* thou art *thirsting after*, Matt. v. 6. Now thou wilt completely enjoy thyself, and thy God, and therein be happy for ever.

5thly. There is *the pleasure of the work and employment*; though here I find a vail interposing: No doubt, but the soul, as it is essentially life and action, will be constantly employed in the other state, and that with suitable comfort, and pleasure to itself; but wherein, or how it shall be employed, at present we rather guess than know: It is probable, the exercise of divine grace will be part of our work in heaven. It is said of those that *die in the Lord, that their works follow them, or follow with them*, Rev. xiv. 13. *i. e.* as some gloss; *their works go along with them*; are continued in the other world: *They rest* indeed *from their labours*, from a great deal of their work on earth, and from the toil and trouble of all of it; but part of their work here will remain so hereafter. As for instance, here we contem-

plate God : This we shall do in heaven, though with more success and satisfaction. Now we know in part, then that which is in part shall be done away : Now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face ; we shall see him as he is, and know as we are known, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 11. There will be no study indeed in heaven, such as our present distant imperfect state needs ; but I presume, there will be still inquiry ; for if the angels pry and look into divine things, for the further improvement and satisfaction of their minds, as the *apostle* intimates they do, 1 *Pet.* i. 12. Why should we think the saints will be above searches of this nature ?

Farther, here it is part of our work to resign ourselves to God, subject ourselves to him ; endeavouring to bring our hearts under the awe and influence of his authority. This is often done by us, if Christians, with great seriousness and solemnity ; and yet, after all, it is so imperfectly done, that we still find cause to do it over again, and again : And the same will be our work in heaven, though performed with more success. Self-subjection is now our *desire*, then our *attainment*, our habitual state and frame, which yet hinders not a constant, *actual* resignation : And how great the pleasure of this devout persons may conjecture, from what they find and feel in the present, imperfect degrees of it, “ A soul,” says * one, “ formed into an
 “ obediential subject frame (*viz.* to God), what
 “ sweet peace does it enjoy ! Every thing rests
 “ most composedly in its proper place : a bone
 “ out of joint knows no ease, nor lets the body
 “ enjoy any : The creature is not in its place,
 “ but when it is thus subject, is in subordina-
 “ tion to God : By flying out of this subordina-

* How.
 Blessed.
 Right.
 p. 158.

“ tion, the world of mankind is become one
 “ great disjointed body ; full of weary tossings,
 “ unacquainted with ease or rest : That soul,
 “ that is but in a degree reduced to that blessed
 “ state and temper, is, as it were, in a new
 “ world : So great and happy a change does it
 “ now feel in itself. But when this transform-
 “ ation shall be completed in it, and the will
 “ of God shall be no sooner known than rested
 “ in, with a complacential approbation ; and
 “ every motion of the first and great Mover
 “ shall be an *efficacious law*, to guide and de-
 “ termine all our motions ; and the lesser wheels
 “ shall presently run, at the first impulse of the
 “ great and master-wheel, without the least rub
 “ or hesitation : When the law of sin shall no
 “ longer check the law of God ; when all the
 “ contentions of a rebellious flesh, all the coun-
 “ terstrivings of a perverse, ungovernable heart
 “ shall cease for ever ; O ! inconceivable bless-
 “ edness of this consent, the pleasure of this
 “ joyful harmony, this peaceful accord !” This
 a Christian is aspiring after here on earth :
 This he is essaying and attempting, though with
 great disappointment. Well, in heaven he will
 be employed the same way ; only without the
 reluctancy and opposition of a carnal mind : He
 is now *resigning*, then he shall be *resigned*. He
 now says, Lord, *I would be thine* ; then he can
 say, *I am thine, fully thine* ; all former enmity
 being removed, and the heart wrought up to an
 unreserved absolute subjection and obedience to
 the great God. This, O my soul ! is the work
 of heaven ; here the joy of heaven.

Farther, it is our work here to love God, to
 delight in him : And surely this will not cease
 in heaven ; the *apostle* assures us of the contrary,

1 Cor. xiii. 8. Love is an heavenly grace, and the exercise of it will be the business of heaven; *will be heaven.* “* Love,” says the foremen-^{* Ibid.} tioned great author, “is an eminent part of the 161.
“ likeness of God in his saints: It is an excel-
“ lency, considered either in its original, or
“ copy, made up of *pleasantness*. Love to a
“ friend is not without high delight; especially
“ when he is present and enjoyed. Love to a
“ saint riseth higher in nobleness and pleasure.
“ It is now in its highest improvement, in both
“ these aspects of it. Now does the soul take
“ up its stated dwelling in love, even in God
“ who is love: and as he is love, it is now in-
“ closed and encompassed with love, conversant
“ in the proper region and element of love;
“ the love of God is now perfected in him;
“ that love, which casts out tormenting fear:
“ So that here is pleasure without mixture.
“ How naturally will the blessed soul now dis-
“ solve and melt in pleasure; it is now framed
“ on purpose for love-embraces and enjoyments!
“ It shall now love like God, as one composed
“ of love; it shall no longer be its complaint
“ and burden, that it cannot retaliate in this
“ kind, that being beloved, it cannot love.”
Love, as it includes high estimation and reverence of God, steady adherence to him, a delightful view of his perfections and excellencies; an approving, with applause, his providences, government, and all his ways; this, I doubt not, will be the soul’s exercise in heaven; it will almost lose itself, as I may say, in the contemplation of these things; for ever admiring the wisdom and excellency of the author. Here, O my soul! will be thy heaven; hence joy unspeakable, and glorified.

Again, Here we are often employed in worship; which indeed is the most noble, honourable service we are capable of; the glory and distinction of our nature. *All thy works shall praise thee, thy saints shall bless thee*, Psal. cxlv. 10. And, we need not question, this shall continue our work *in heaven*: Hence heaven is called a church, Heb. xii. 23. And John, in his vision, represents the members thereof, as *not resting night nor day, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*; as *casting their crowns before the throne, and worshipping him that lives for ever and ever*, Rev. iv. 8. 10. They agnize and acknowledge his perfections, giving him the glory of his attributes, providences, grace, &c. And how delightful may we suppose their worship! how entertaining to the mind! There is no pleasure on earth like that of worship; even now, when the heart is in frame, in our low manner: But then it will be always so, and much more so; the object ever present; the mind filled with the glories of it; and all the faculties exerted in the inward acts of love, praise, resignation, &c. and these, it may be, outwardly expressed, in a way suitable to that state. Let me only add, that as the imperfection of all our services and worship shall be done away; so such service as, in this life, imply imperfection, shall cease then: There will be no confession or contrition; no humiliation in *paradise*. All works of this nature are calculated for the present meridian; a state of sin and sorrow. Here we sow in tears, but there we shall reap in joy. Our present complaints shall be turned into songs of praise, and our notes of grief into triumphant hallelujahs!

Again, I doubt not we shall be employed in

mutual converse with our fellow-saints ; and -it is probable with the *angels* too ; comparing notes with one and another ; conversing sometimes with the *patriarchs* and *prophets* ; sometimes with the *apostles* and *martyrs* ; sometimes with our old dear friends and acquaintances ; ministers, Christian brethren, &c. discoursing with them of former passages here on earth, as well as of the present enjoyments of heaven. This, O my soul ! and such like, will be thy business in the other world, in the paradise of God : Thou wilt, it is probable, be everlastingly employed in some such way as this. And was there nothing more, methinks, this alone would be enough of itself to create a *paradise* !

What pleasure do we sometimes find now in the work of God ! in any little service that we have reason to think is accepted of God ; and in which we have the testimony of conscience, that it is well designed ! How grateful is praise and prayer, even with fasting and tears, if the heart be engaged ! If God touch our tongue with a coal from his altar ; how ready to cry out, on such encouragement, Here am I, send me ; even though the errand itself be difficult and ungrateful ! But, O the pleasure of heaven ! How great the joy and delight of our work there ! when we shall never miscarry in it ; never have an uncomfortable reflection upon it ; never suffer the reproach of conscience, as having been careless or unfaithful. In a word, when every service will be performed with perfect integrity and all suitable affection ; and God himself present therein, crowning all with his favour and smiles. O ! may I be better acquainted with this work here on earth ; and may it be my everlasting work in heaven !

A fourth Meditation on HEAVEN.

6thly. **T**HERE is *the pleasure of the beatific vision*, as it is generally called; that is, of seeing and enjoying God. What this includes at present, we know not: but the scripture not only signifies that *we shall see him*, but that there is a felicity and happiness wrapt up in it, 1 John iii. 2. We shall have such a sight of the divine Being, as will transform the soul into its likeness; *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*. The clear, distinct, more immediate view we shall have of the blessed God in *paradise*, will powerfully impress and transform the mind; leave upon it the very image of the object: And who can tell how much it will raise, entertain and delight? When *Moses* had that interview with God in the mount, was admitted into his nearer presence; it is said, *his face shone*; there was an heavenly lustre, some rays of divinity derived to him, insomuch, that he was forced to *put on a veil*, when he conversed with the people, *Exod. xxxiv. 30. 35*. Nor is it an improbable conjecture, that this extraordinary manifestation of God to him was a means of sustaining and supporting his spirits, through his fast of forty days. He had then meat to eat that the world knew not of: *the joy of the Lord* was his *strength*; which, for that time, set him so far above the necessities of the body, that he subsisted without food or sleep. And, O my soul! will not the presence of God in heaven, fully, immediately, and for ever enjoyed, have a more glorious influence! How delightful is that short taste of the divine presence, holy men are now

and then favoured with here on earth! How do they triumph in it! If he *lift up the light of his countenance upon them*, they are ready to pity, I had almost said, insult the poor worldling, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* But O! the pleasures of *paradise*, when we shall dwell in his presence for ever; never more complain of an interposing cloud, or suffer an eclipse; but have his light and favour filling the mind, and invigorating every faculty. This, O my soul! is heaven; *in his presence is fulness of joy*, *Psal. xvi. ult.*

7thly. There is *the pleasure of being with Christ*; of conversing and enjoying our glorified Redeemer: This we may with confidence expect: *Where I am, there shall my servant be*, John xii. 26. And again, John xvii. 24. *Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.* We shall see him in his exalted state, in his glorious resurrection body: see him upon his throne, incircled with angels, and worshipping saints; receiving the honour, and marks of distinction due to him. And who can estimate the pleasure of this? “Was I only admitted, says one, to look in
“within the vail, and behold my Lord sur-
“rounded with all his glory, it would be a mar-
“vellous consolation to me, though I were sure
“never to partake of it.” But granting this to be too high a flight, we may be certain, the view of his glory, with interest and participation, will greatly entertain. When *Peter* had a short specimen of it in the mount, he cries out, *It is good to be here*, Matt. xvii. 4. Shall we not much more say thus of heaven, when we behold his fuller glory, and are admitted to converse with him in that glory; yea, are glorified with him?

It may be, we shall hear Christ himself commenting upon his own work, displaying the wonders of his grace and love. However, we shall see the work finished; see him possessed of the joy that was once set before him, share with him in that joy. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Matt. xxv. 21. *Shall sit down with him in his throne of glory*, Rev. iii. 21.

8thly. There is *the pleasure of reviewing and looking back upon the former state*. This, no question, will be an ingredient in heaven, and contribute to the happiness of it: *Son, remember*, says *Abraham* to the rich man in hell, *Luke* xvi. 25. In the other world they will remember past transactions. The saints will *remember*, with unspeakable affection, and devout resentment, the former things; in their ignorance, enmity, and distance from God; before he called them by his grace: *Remember* the sin, folly, and danger of their unconverted state; the methods of divine providence and grace in recovering them to himself: *Remember* the admonitions, warnings, convictions they had, and the blessed issue of all at last. With what transport will they be ready to say as the *apostle*, 1 *Tim.* i. 13. *I was before, a blasphemer, injurious, a drunkard, a swearer, carnal, earthly, sensual, a companion of fools, &c. but I obtained mercy*: In me God shewed forth all long-suffering and patience. And O! how will this strike their affections, excite their love, praise, and gratitude: Make them cast down their crowns before the throne, and fill them with admiration and joy for ever! They will *remember* the difficulties and trials they passed through; the temptations and tears that befel them: *Remember* their praying, weeping, fasting, their conflicts and fears; their supports, re-

liefs, deliverances, and for ever adore the wisdom, mercy, and grace of providence in its conduct towards them. In short, all the scenes of life will often open before their eyes; they will *remember* what they were, where they were; view themselves upon the precipices from whence they were so often saved, and seasonably rescued; even *snatched as firebrands out of the fire*. O! my soul! how grateful this remembrance, how entertaining! It will not only supply thy songs, but increase thy joys, and give relish to the other delights of *paradise*.

Nor is it unfit to suppose that there will be a comparison between the former condition and state in earth, and the present happy state and frame in heaven. Thou wilt, O my soul! be apt thus to reason with thyself; “ * I that did ^{How,} sometimes bear the accursed image of the ^{178.} prince of darkness, do now partake of the holy, pure nature of the Father of lights. I was a mere *chaos*, an hideous heap of deformity, confusion, and darkness: But he that made light to shine out of darkness, shined into me, to give the knowledge of his own glory, in the face of Jesus Christ; and since has made my way as the shining light, shining brighter and brighter unto this perfect day. I was a habitation for dragons, a cage of noisome lusts: After I began to live the spiritual new life, how slow and faint was my progress towards perfection! how indisposed did I find myself to the proper actions of that life! to go about any spiritual work was, too often, as to climb an hill, or strive against the stream; or as an attempt to fly without wings: How listless to these things! how lifeless in them! impressions made, how quickly lost! gracious

“ frames, how soon wrought off and gone ! cha-
 “ racters of glory rased out, and overspread with
 “ earth and dirt ! But, O my soul ! divine com-
 “ liness hath, *now at length*, made me perfect :
 “ The glory of God doth now clothe me ; they
 “ are his ornaments I wear : He hath now per-
 “ fectly mastered the enmity of my heart ; I am
 “ all spirit and life ; I feel myself disburdened
 “ and unclogged of all the heavy, oppressive
 “ weights that hung upon me ; no body of
 “ death doth now incumber me ; no deadness
 “ of heart ; no coldness of love ; no aversion
 “ from God ; no sensual inclinations or affec-
 “ tions ; no sinful division of heart between
 “ God and the creatures ; he hath now the
 “ whole of me ; I enjoy and delight in none
 “ but him. O blessed change ! O happy day !
 “ This is that I longed and laboured for ; which
 “ I prayed and waited for ; which I so earnestly
 “ breathed after, and restlessly pursued. What
 “ would * I once have given for a steady, abid-
 “ ing frame of holiness ! for an heart constantly
 “ bent and biassed towards God ! constantly se-
 “ rious, constantly tender, lively, watchful,
 “ heavenly, spiritual, meek, humble, cheerful,
 “ self-denying ! how have I cried, striven for
 “ this, to get such an heart, such a temper of
 “ spirit ! And now, O my soul ! thy desires are
 “ crowned and accomplished ; thou *now fully*
 “ *art what thou once fain wouldest have been.*”

* Ibid. p.
 184.

In this manner, we may suppose, the soul in
 heaven will review its former, and contemplate
 its present self ; comparing the one with the
 other ; present lights with former darkness ;
 present purity, brightness, life, with former en-
 mity, corruption and dross ; surveying the con-
 duct of sovereign wisdom and grace, approving

and applauding every step of Providence, and recanting former censures. O! Now I see, says the soul, the kind design of my God and Father, in his severe (as I once thought them) dispensations towards me; now I see God is true to his word; all things *have* wrought together for good; what he was doing *once*, I understood not; but now I know: *To the King eternal, immortal, be honour and glory for ever and ever.* This, O my soul! will be part of thy heaven, one of the streams of *paradise*, where thou wilt bathe and refresh thyself for ever!

9thly. There are *several additional pleasures*, which will accrue to the saints after the resurrection, and *in the final state*; partly introductory to their happiness, and partly constitutive of it; as the coming of their Lord in his *Shechinah* and glory: they now *love his appearing*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Then they shall enjoy it, and triumph in it; when he appears, they *shall appear with him in glory*, Col. iii. 4. *He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, &c.* and he *will bring them with him*, 1 Thess. iv. 16. He will come *in the clouds*, and every eye shall see him. But O! the transports and extasies of joy this will occasion to his redeemed, saved ones. *Farther*, there is the pleasure and comfort of the resurrection body, with all its ornaments and beauty; of the future judgment, the process of that solemn day, in which the saints shall be first acquit, and then be assessors with their Lord, viewing and applauding the wisdom and equity of his proceedings; and sealing, as I may say, his sentence with their *Amen*.—There is the pleasure of their solemn enthronement and coronation; after which *they enter into the joy of their Lord*, Matt. xxv. 21.

10thly, and lastly. All this felicity *is eternal*: They have an eternal heaven, an eternal *paradise*; as they have an *exceeding*, so an *eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *The inheritance there is undefiled and fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. Here our joys are but a taste, and how transient! If we have a little of heaven in our frame, and it pleaseth God now and then to shine upon the soul with light and comfort, how soon is it over! If we get upon the mount, we must presently come down again; mix with the world, feel its vanity and sorrow: But in *paradise* there will be no vicissitudes, no change of state or frame; no loss or diminution of happiness; the gulf is fixed, and the state eternal: *At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore*, Psal. xvi. ult.

And this, O my soul! is heaven; this is *paradise*, i. e. this is part of it: Part of the joy and blessedness thou art waiting and hoping for: it is a part, I say, though but a small, a very small part: These are *unspeakable words*, inconceivable, unutterable glories belonging to that world; which even an angel *may not, cannot* unfold to us: If thou art so happy as to arrive there at last, and be one of the possessors, thou wilt find thyself agreeably surprised, and have reason to say with the *queen of Sheba*, *It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, though I believed not the words*, &c. heard on earth; true as to the substance of this blessedness, but *behold, the half was not told me*, 1 Kings x. 6, 7. Lord, help me to believe the words, *and may I come, and my eyes see it!*

A fifth Meditation on HEAVEN.

How glorious a state this! Who would not say, *Let thy servant depart in peace, and see thy salvation*: but let me a little examine the evidences of it. These are not vain words, they are my life; here is my hope and happiness, my all: And it infinitely concerns me to be on sure grounds. I shall therefore stop a while, and review the arguments that may assist and establish my faith herein. Now that there is a state of after-blessedness, such a state as has been described here, called *paradise*, may appear from three sorts of arguments; rational, divine, and sensible. I shall begin with the first, the rational, or moral arguments. And

1st. It may be argued from the nature and excellency of the human soul, which is a spiritual, immaterial substance; we feel in ourselves something that understands, reasons, and wills; which can act spontaneously; can chuse and refuse, and is the subject of various passions; as love, hope, * fear, desire, grief, joy, &c. All which are so different from all the properties of matter, which we are acquainted with, that we must conclude they have a subject essentially different from matter. It was never yet proved, nor I presume can be proved, that matter is † capable

* Vide *Sherlock* on the immortality of the soul and future state, p. 50, &c.

† Several have undertaken to demonstrate that matter is not capable of thought. An ingenious attempt to this purpose may be seen in Mr. *Ditton* on the resurrection of Christ in the *Appendix*.

of thought : If any pretend it may be refined to that degree, as to be capable of thinking, it is enough to say, all the matter we know of is wholly lifeless and inactive, can neither move itself nor think. Consequently we may infer, that the thinking principle within us is distinct from matter : And this affords a good argument of the soul's immortality ; if it be not matter or body, it dies not with the body : All material compositions, such as human bodies are, may be dissolved by the separation of their parts ; but that which has no parts, no extension, is corruptible, it cannot be dissolved by any natural cause ; it may, indeed, be annihilated by the will and power of God, from whence it had its first being. But when God has created an immortal nature, that nothing can destroy, but his own immediate power, as it is an absolute security against a natural death and dissolution, so it is an argument God never intends to annihilate it.

2dly. Add to this the excellent capacities and powers of the soul ; how admirable, how divine, and even *God-like* a being is the human mind ! Whoever views it in its several faculties, as understanding, will, memory, &c. must own it designed to immortality : To which,

3dly. I may subjoin, that the souls of good men are in a state of improvement, continually advancing towards perfection ; they are pressing forwards towards the mark. If the Christian compare himself at fifty or sixty, with what he was at fifteen or twenty, how great, ordinarily, the difference ! * And even when the body decays, and its pleasures become insipid, the soul is often in the most flourishing state ; wisdom, counsel, piety, and devotion, are the glory of age. And shall we imagine, that after the soul

* *Sherlock,*
Ibid.

has attained to the greatest state of improvement it can in the body, it shall fall into nothing ! Does not this look rather like a state of probation and trial for another life !

4thly. It is an argument to the same purpose, that good men find, in themselves, ardent desires after immortality ; indeed, *these desires* are universal, planted in the minds of all mankind. It is shocking to human nature to think of *losing all being* ; and after a few years of such a life as this in the body, be reduced to nothing : But in good men these desires are more steady and vigorous. *We that are in this tabernacle*, says the apostle, *do groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon—that mortality may be swallowed up of life*, 2 Cor. v. 4. And shall we suppose that God will defeat the expectations he is the author of ? That he has wrought in our very nature a strong and powerful principle in vain, and to no purpose ; which, with respect to good men especially, only serves to delude and cheat them ?

5thly. The governing wisdom and justice * of God requires there should be a state of after-retribution : It is certain these perfections are not sufficiently displayed ; do not appear in proper lustre and glory, in the present administration of things : and indeed, if we look no farther than this world, there lie objections against them, not easily to be removed. What would be thought of a prince, who, in the usual course of his government, distinguisheth his worst subjects (habitual enemies to public peace, and rebels to

* I resume some things touched before, that the main heads of evidence being collected, and shewn in view, may appear in their greater strength.

their sovereign) with honours, preferments, and all possible marks of favour; whilst the peaceable, virtuous, and good, are not only overlooked, but left to be insulted? Could he be thought a wise governor? Would he not rather fall under contempt and censure, as proceeding contrary to all the maxims of equity and prudence? And shall we impute this to the blessed God, which would be a reproach to a creature, that has but a shadow of his excellency and perfection? And yet, if there be no other state, I see not how we shall be able to vindicate his government; how it is possible to account for the methods of present providence towards good and bad, without taking in future prospects, and allowing future rewards and punishments. How often do we see that the best men have the hardest measures in this life? The great *apostle*, St. *Paul*, was a prisoner bound with a chain, whilst *Nero*, vile to a *proverb*, was an emperor sitting upon his throne: The sensualist, in the *parable*, we find *clothed in purple and fine linen*; whilst the saint, dear to God and the care of angels, *lay at his gate full of sores*. And thus it has always been more or less: *They are ungodly*, saith the psalmist, *who prosper in the world, that increase in riches*, Psalm lxxiii. 12. But as for himself he complains, *That all day long he was plagued and chastened every morning*, v. 14. And what conclusion must we make from hence? That there is no God, no providence, or that God is not holy, wise, just, and good? No, the inference is only this (and how well is it grounded?) that God will judge the righteous and the wicked; that verily there is a reward for the righteous; that there is another world, a better

state to come, *a paradise* ; and that *the upright shall have dominion in the morning*.

This, O my soul ! thou mayest be assured of, from the consideration both of thy own nature, and the nature of God : Thou art too excellent a being to die away, and perish for ever, after a few moments of faint life here ; the God that made thee designed thee for farther and higher things : This thou mayest infer from thy own frame, and from the state of his present government. Not that I have demonstration from natural light and evidence ; what occasion then for faith ! what room for the exercise of that grace ! But I have the highest degree of probability and moral assurance ; and such as, considering the weight of the subject, the importance of eternal things, challengeth my utmost regard : The *atheist* cannot so much as pretend to prove there is no after-state, no heaven. I have proof, not only that there *may be* such a state, but that it is *most highly probable*. Consequently, to neglect it, and prefer this world to it, would be the utmost folly and madness. But,

2dly. I have not only moral and probable arguments for *paradise*, but divine arguments, as I take leave to call them ; that is, express scripture revelation, which carries the matter farther, and makes it certain. One cannot reasonably imagine, that the human spirit is mortal : But after all, it must be granted, that we know so little of the nature and philosophy of the soul, that our best security for its future subsistence, is from the holy scriptures. “ * All
“ our inquiries,” says the Lord *Verulam*, about
“ the nature of the reasonable soul, must be

* Advance. of
Learn.
lib. 4.
c. 3.

“ bound over, at last, to religion, there to be
 “ determined and defined ; for otherwise they
 “ still lie open to many errors, and illusions of
 “ sense. For seeing the substance of the soul
 “ was not deduced and extracted in her crea-
 “ tion, from the mass of heaven and earth, but
 “ immediately inspired from God ; and seeing
 “ the laws of heaven and earth are the proper
 “ subjects of philosophy : How can the know-
 “ ledge of the substance of the reasonable soul
 “ be derived or fetched from philosophy ? But
 “ it must be drawn from the same inspiration,
 “ from whence the substance thereof first flow-
 “ ed.” It is from God and his word that we
 learn most fully, and with greatest satisfaction,
 what the soul is ; that it is immortal, that it is
 intended for another state ; that we learn *what*
 that state is, and *that* it is. And here I find the
 testimony so frequent and clear, that the cer-
 tainty of a future heaven is equal to my cer-
 tainty of the truth of scripture revelation ; if
 the Bible be true, heaven is certain. Let me
 therefore briefly examine what it says on this
 head.

The revelation to *Adam* is too concise to af-
 ford much assistance here ; but he wanted not
 some intimations of a state of after-happiness.
 The tree of life in *paradise*, and indeed *para-*
dise itself, were figures of heaven, as was re-
 marked before : The pious *patriarchs* lived in
 the lively hope thereof, as the *apostle* assures us,
Heb. xi. *Abraham* was not the only believer
 that expected another and better country, that
 looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder
 and maker is God, v. 10. And with what com-
 posure of mind, and vigour of faith, does the
 expiring patriarch cry out, *I have waited for thy*

salvation, O God ! Gen. xlix. 18. It was revealed to the *Jews*, their *Canaan* was a type of heaven; in the promise and possession of the one, they had the assurance of the other. The writings of the prophets, especially the *psalmist*, abound with references to it ; speaking of it as the present support, and future felicity of the saints. *The hope of unjust men shall perish*, says Solomon, Prov. xi. 7. *But the righteous has hope in his death*, chap. xiv. 32. *in his death*, and beyond it: His hope lives, when that of the unjust man perisheth. And it is observable, that on this consideration, the *psalmist* triumphs over the wicked in the midst of their prosperity, *Psal.* lxxiii. He was for awhile indeed gruelled with the case, v. 12, 13. In the 17th verse we have his victory, *I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end*. He cannot mean barely their dying, for death is common to good and bad: *How dieth the wise man, even as the fool*, Eccles. ii. 16. He must intend therefore the different issues of death ; which *when he went into God's sanctuary*, and had his mind there awakened, and his graces excited and exercised, he clearly understood : *Then* the known, and received principles of his religion had their due and proper influence : Then he viewed the worldling in slippery places, on the precipice ; foresaw his fall and ruin, with the deliverance and triumph of the saints.

In the *New Testament* this doctrine fills both pages, it being the distinguishing character of that dispensation ; *that it has brought life and immortality to light*, 2 Tim. i. 10. *I give unto my sheep*, says Christ, *eternal life, and they shall never perish*, John x. 28. *In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for*

you, John xiv. 2. And again, Matt. xii. 32. *Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; there is a crown, a crown of life, which God, as righteous judge, will give.* Both Testaments abundantly confirm this. O my soul! here thou hast a sure word of prophecy to found and direct thy faith. This state of after-happiness is what God has spoken of, *by the mouth of all his prophets, since the world began.* And thou hast the farther testimony of the great *Amen*, the faithful and true witness. Here therefore thou mayest fix thy foot, with full assurance of faith, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

A sixth Meditation on the same Subject.

3dly. I took notice, that there are also *sensible* arguments and evidences of this truth: We have such discoveries of heaven, and of a future glorious *paradise*, as our senses are capable, in some measure, of taking in, and thereby of assisting faith. As

1st. We have the testimony of one of the inhabitants of *paradise*, who came from thence, and has given us assurance concerning it, I mean the Son of God: *He was in the beginning with God*, John i. 1. *Had a glory with the Father, before the world was*, John xvii. 5. *He came forth from God*, John xxvi. 28. *came down from heaven*, v. 38. *He was made flesh, and dwelt among us*: And whilst he did so, bore frequent testimony concerning the heavenly *paradise*. It was indeed the great subject of his sermons, as might be shewn: That is most express, John xiv. 2. *In my Father's house are many*

mansions ; he adds, *if it were not so, I would have told you* : As if he had said, “ I never yet
“ deceived you ; but upon all occasions have
“ dealt faithfully with you, let you know what
“ you must expect (*the foxes have holes, says*
“ *he, and the birds of the air have nests, but the*
“ *Son of Man hath not where to lay his head,*
“ *Matt. viii. 19, 20.*), have warned you of your
“ dangers, temptations, sufferings ; and I would
“ not impose upon you in the greatest concern
“ of all ; no ; you may depend upon my word ;
“ heaven is sure ; *in my Father’s house there are*
“ *many mansions.*”

I may add, he continued his testimony to the last : With how much assurance does he speak of that world, when just leaving this ! Thus, to the thief on the cross, *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise* ; Luke xxiii. 43. And when expiring himself, *Father* (says he), *into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Further, he renewed his testimony, when in *paradise* ; not only by the *Spirit* in his *apostles*, but immediately by himself ; as to *John* frequently in his revelation ; particularly in that known passage, *Rev. xiv. 13. I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Blessed are the dead.* And, O my soul ! how sure, and even sensible the evidence from hence ; here is one of the possessors of *paradise* giving testimony to it ; a person of the most glorious character and greatest credibility ; who spoke what he knew, and had seen, and his testimony is true.

2dly. Several, in our world, have conversed and had interviews with the stated inhabitants of that world : For instance, after the *Lord Christ’s* ascension into heaven, *John* saw him, *Rev. i. 13.* The apostle *Paul* saw him in his way to *Damascus*, *Acts ix. He saw the Just One, and*

heard the words of his mouth, Acts xxii. 14. Stephen also saw him; he looked stedfastly up to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand, Acts vii. 55, 56. He saw the *Shechinah*, or bright shining cloud, in which the divine majesty used to appear to the church of old: This he saw in *paradise*; where also was Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, in a conspicuous glory: He saw him in his exalted state. I add the apostles *Peter*, *James*, and *John* saw *Moses* and *Elias*, two residents of heaven, on the mount of transfiguration, *Matt.* xvii. 3.

3dly. Some of our world have been visibly taken up to *paradise*, as *Enoch* and *Elias*; which I reckon a sensible evidence of another state, especially when many ages after, one of them made his appearance upon the earth, as in the transfiguration. So Christ ascended before many witnesses, *Acts* i. 9, 10. He was taken up to heaven in the presence of his disciples, they gazing after him; and, as I before observed, some on earth saw him there, heard him speak from thence.

4thly. We have an instance of one caught up out of our world into that other world (I mean the great apostle *St. Paul*, as in the text), who afterwards lived, and conversed on earth many years, bearing testimony to the truth and certainty of *paradise*, displaying its excellencies and comforts, recommending it to the choice of others; and, by incessant labour and pains, endeavouring to promote the interest of it: Indeed he had not leave to draw a map of the heavenly *Canaan*, and fully represent what he saw; but how frequently and affectionately does he speak of it! How full of heaven his writings

and conversation ! Bonds, imprisonments, nothing moved him, *so he might finish his course with joy*, Acts xx. 24. He zealously served his God, *in hope of eternal life*, Tit. i. 1, 2. Was ready to be offered up, willing to spend and be spent ; and all from the view of *paradise*, the prospect of *a crown of righteousness at that day*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. And how much weight ought this testimony to have with us ! It is impossible, considering his character and station, whilst a *Pharisee*, the circumstances of his conversion ; his conduct afterwards in the whole course of his ministry ; his suffering and patience in the cause of God ; his contempt of this world, and regard to another : It is impossible, I say, considering these things, with reason, to suspect him of fraud ; we can neither question that he was in *paradise*, nor that what he says of *paradise* is true.

5thly. We have frequent messengers from that world to ours ; to say nothing of the apparitions of departed spirits : The ministry of angels is an instance of this kind, and a proof of another state ; *they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation*, Heb. i. ult. And how often have they appeared *visibly*, and had sensible intercourse with mankind ! speaking to them, and conversing with them. And though this is not now so common as heretofore, yet still they continue their office and correspondence with us ; and consequently, are a standing evidence of *paradise*, as their visible appearance is a sensible evidence of it.

6thly. God has been pleased to manifest something of heaven in the souls of devout men, affording them a specimen of the after-glory ; a foretaste of the joys of *paradise*. The apostles

had some experience of this, when present with Christ at his transfiguration ; they not only saw a sensible *Shechinah* and glory, but felt a glory in their own minds, a little heaven within. Hence *Peter* cries out, *It is good to be here ; let us build three tabernacles*, Matt. xvii. 4. And how many are there, who in their more solemn, serious frame, have found the like entertainment ! If they have not been wrapt up to *paradise*, *paradise* has been brought down to them. Lord, stay thy hand, says one, I am an earthen vessel. I am as full of heaven, says another, as I can hold in this lower state. “ O ! that I “ could let you know,” says the seraphic Mr. *John Janeway* on his death-bed, “ what I now “ feel ; that I could shew you what I now see ; “ I would not for a world, for a million of “ worlds be without a Christ, and a pardon. I “ would not for a world live any longer ; the “ very thoughts of a possibility of a recovery “ make me tremble ; I now see something of the “ invisible world ; I now feel something of it. “ How long, dear Lord, come, Lord Jesus, “ come quickly ; why are his chariot-wheels so “ long a coming ?”

And what shall we say to the passage Mr. *Flavel* relates ? of the truth of which he tells us he had very good assurance (and no wonder, when I doubt not, he knew the man, as the *apostle* did him, that *was caught up to the third heaven*), the substance of the story is this ; “ As the per- “ son he means was travelling alone, he resolved “ to make the best improvement he could of his “ solitude ; accordingly he set himself seriously “ to meditate upon divine subjects, and parti- “ cularly the life to come, and the manner of “ the soul’s existence hereafter : After awhile,

“ he perceived his thoughts begin to fix, and
“ come closer to these great and astonishing
“ things, than usual, and his affections to rise
“ with proportionable life and vigour. And
“ perceiving himself in this extraordinary frame,
“ he did, whilst master of himself, lift up his
“ heart to God, and beg he might meet with
“ no interruption that day; which was granted
“ him. And thus going on, his thoughts began
“ to swell higher and higher, like the water in
“ *Ezekiel's* vision, till at last they became an
“ overflowing flood: Such was the intenseness
“ of his mind; such the ravishing tastes of hea-
“ venly joys, and such his full assurance of his
“ interest therein, that he utterly lost all sight
“ and sense of this world, and the concern-
“ ments thereof: And for some hours knew not
“ where he was, nor what he was about: But
“ having lost a great quantity of blood at the
“ nose, he found himself so faint, that it
“ brought him a little more to himself: And
“ after he had washed himself at a spring, and
“ drunk of the water for his refreshment: He
“ continued to the end of his journey, which
“ was thirty miles; and all this while was scarce
“ sensible; and says, he had several trances of
“ considerable continuance. The same blessed
“ frame was preserved all that night, and, in a
“ lower degree, great part of the next day:
“ The night passed without one wink of sleep;
“ and yet he declares, he never had a sweeter
“ night's rest in all his life. Still, adds the
“ story, *the joy of the Lord overflowed him,*
“ and he seemed to be an inhabitant of another
“ world. I shall only take notice, that he used
“ for many years after to call that day, *one of*
“ *the days of heaven*, and professed he under-

“ stood more of the life of heaven by it, than
“ by all the books he ever read, or discourses
“ he ever entertained about it.”

Now here was heaven upon earth: And though this was extraordinary, some lesser degree of the like intercourse with heaven, other good men have experienced. It pleaseth God now and then to unveil his glory; to grant us in this wilderness a cluster of grapes from the promised land, as a pledge, earnest and foretaste of the full inheritance.

And these are some of the evidences for another world; of the truth and certainty of *paradise*. God has not only revealed it in nature, in his word, but *even in our senses*; not but that there is still occasion for the exercise of faith; the truth of scripture history is supposed, and the veracity of those who report what they have seen or felt: But this being granted, and it has all the proof things of this nature are capable of; the evidence is, I say, *sensible*. Suppose the question be (and we know it has been disputed) whether any of the stars and planets are inhabited: Some deny, others affirm; others think it only probable: In the midst of the debate a person appears, that came from one of these (supposed) worlds, who had lived there; and affirms that it is inhabited; that he had seen and conversed with the inhabitants thereof, and such and such was the state of their affairs. Suppose also some of our world had found a passage thither, returned from thence, and confirmed the same thing; who sees not that this would put an end to the controversy? Were the witnesses credible; persons of reputation and character, their testimony would supersede all farther inquiries, silence objectors, and remove suspi-

cions. And such are the witnesses concerned in the present case ; here are several who have been in *paradise*, converse there, some of them stated residents of that world, who came from thence, appeared and lived amongst us ; all persons of the highest credibility, and all agreeing in their reports of *paradise*. And how many devout souls are there on earth, that live in the views of that world ; that keep up a frequent correspondence with it, essaying its work, foretasting its rewards, as a sensible pledge of what remains : So that all sorts of arguments concur to the evidence of another world, another better state. O my soul ! how sure the foundation of thy faith. Alas ! that it is so weak ! attended with so many jealousies and fears. *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief ; shine on my mind ; favour me with more of the blessed prelibations of that world : Thou hast told me of a future heaven, and on thy testimony I rely ; into that I resolve my faith. But as thou hast been pleased, in great condescension to the weakness and infirmities of thy servants, sometimes to unveil thy glory, and bring it down to their senses, I would thankfully receive, and improve these instances of thy goodness : May I, by inward sensation, know and feel more of thy heaven, and with patience wait for it.*

A seventh Meditation on HEAVEN.

The INSTRUCTION.

Is there such various and strong evidence for another state, a *paradise* ? Application.

1st. How unreasonable the cause of infidelity, and how inexcusable those that espouse it ! We have the testimony of God himself, that cannot lie, that will not, need not deceive us. That there is an heaven, our own reason gives the utmost encouragement to expect it ; nay, our senses assist and confirm our faith : And yet all this will not satisfy ; there are still found objectors ; some that call it in question, and some that expressly deny it ; and this under the specious pretence of acting with more caution and reason than others. They gravely tell us, they are not for believing in the dark ; they cannot resign to authorities, and take things upon trust. But how shameful, not to say impudent, this pretence ! how injurious the insinuation ! As if the Christian had no evidence, or reason to support his faith ; and on that account only they rejected it : When really, whatever they assume, they themselves are guilty of what they charge upon others ; believing without reason. They are, excuse the expression, *the most resolute believers* ; believe through more embarrassments, and greater difficulties, than any that attend the Christian faith. This might be made appear beyond all contradiction, by comparing the creed of these infidels with that of the Christian. For instance ; they believe, *that this world either was not made at all, or was made by chance ; by a fortuitous concourse of atoms. They believe that the sun, the stars, and all those stupendous systems, came by chance. That the admirable fabric of the human body was formed without contrivance, or design, and fell together by chance. They believe that all the operations of the rational mind, thought, reflection, love, desire, memory, &c. are the effects of matter variously transfigured, refined and*

moved. They believe the continual order and harmony of things; obvious to every eye, is the work of chance; that the sun has rose and set; the heavenly bodies have described their orbits, and accomplished their revolutions in one uniform, regular manner, and this for the space of many thousand years, and all by the force of chance, i. e. of a blind nothing!

And is not this a glorious scheme, a rational faith? Can these men, with any modesty, object against the Christian faith, as void of reason? While they themselves believe all these strange and unaccountable things, not only without, but against reason and demonstration! But whatever is pretended, it is not reason that governs them in this matter; there must be another cause assigned for their infidelity, than what they are willing to own. And, in short, it is not want of evidence, that religion is true; that there is a God, a providence, and a future state, but want of inclination that there should be so: *The fool hath said in his heart, no God; or let there be no God, Psal. xiv. 1.* It is the language of his desire, rather than the conviction of his judgment. The common case of all this herd of men; they have no hopes of heaven; can think of another world only as a place of torment; as an hell; and therefore would fain, if they could, run down the notion of it; their guilt and fears are the chief arguments against it. This is sufficiently intimated by one of themselves (*Lucretius*), who takes notice, “That the * fear of hell and after-punishment

* Et metus ille foras præceps Acheruntis agendus
 Penitus; humanam vitam qui turbat ab imo,
 Omnia suffendens mortis nigrore, neque
 Ullam esse voluptatem liquidam puramq; relinquit.

“ must be utterly abolished, otherwise it will
“ disturb the pleasures and enjoyments of life ;”
which is the true secret of infidelity, and spring
of atheism ; otherwise the belief of immortality
is so agreeable to the rational nature, and the
evidence of it so strong, that it would be a
greater difficulty to reject than admit it. Nor is
there a more effectual method to cure this
distemper, than to endeavour to cure the prin-
ciple, from whence it flows. A good man can
never wish there was no other state ; and a bad
man disbelieves it only because he dislikes it.
O my soul ! guard against the prejudices and
influence of a vicious nature. Let not thy
affections bribe thy judgment : Live so as that a
future, eternal state may be thy hope, not thy
dread : And if thou desirest it, thou wilt never
want sufficient reason to believe it.

2dly. I may hence collect the true notion of
heaven and future happiness. It is almost too
mean to say it consists not in sensual pleasures,
like the impostor’s *paradise* ; nor doth it consist
chiefly in an external glory and magnificence ;
but very much in the state, frame, and disposi-
tion of the soul ; in the purity of the heart, the
rectitude of the mind, and the consequent en-
joyments. Suppose a wicked man in heaven,
i. e. Should he intrude into the place of it, with
his irregular desires, turbulent passions, full of
enmity to God, utterly estranged from the work
and pleasures of religion ; his mind tainted with
envy, malice, &c. Such a one would find no
heaven *in heaven* : The kingdom of God, both
of grace and glory, is within ; the pleasures of
paradise are intellectual. Under this view, O
my soul ! thou must chuse and pursue happi-
ness : And if such an happiness be not agreeable

to thee, thou must either renounce heaven, or correct thy own temper.

3dly. Have I so much certainty of *paradise*, how willing should I be to leave this world, and remove thither ! How readily should I join with the great *apostle* in his choice, *Phil. i. 23. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.* O my soul ! send faith as a spy into that good land ; endeavour to taste some of the fruits of it, and it will quicken thy affections to it, and strip death of its terrors. Death, I know, is not in itself grateful ; it is contrary to the original law and tendency of nature, which was to be happy without dying : But seeing it is now the only way to *paradise*, the present state of things in this world, the full glory and blessedness of the other, should reconcile thee to the passage. Why so fond of earth when such a heaven is in view ! O my soul ! take thyself to task here ; not only think what *paradise* will be, but what earth is : And if the hopes of the one be not sufficient to make death appear desirable, the experience of the other sure will do it. Consider this matter a little.

What a circle of mean services dost thou here move in, attending the demands of the body, and ministring to its appetites. 'The philosopher (*Seneca*) could say, a man would dare to die, though he was neither valiant nor miserable, only weary to do the same things over and over again. Another declares, that if God should grant him, after he had run his race, to begin it again, he would most earnestly refuse it : For, says he, what profit has this life ; and how much toil ? *Farther*, what a clog, incumbrance, and snare do I find this body ? How does it depress, cloud, and enfeeble the mind. On which ac-

count, was there nothing more, a person that has a sense of the dignity of human nature, would be willing to part with the body, that he might get out of this sleepy state, into a state of activity and life. How much are we at present disabled for the work of religion, and the proper employment of spirits? How little do we know, love, and enjoy God? How meanly do we serve him? If our heart is in frame to day, it is, it may be, quite wrong to morrow: We have it to dress and cultivate, to wind up again. And after all, the body, like a dead weight, hangs upon our wheels. *Farther*, how great, how uncomfortable our distance from God here? *Whilst at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 6. How seldom can I get near? How little can I keep near? If now and then he lifts up the light of his countenance upon me, and thereby puts gladness into my heart, anon he hideth his face, and I am troubled. And who would be fond of such a life as this, which at best is an absence from God? *Once more*, how imperfect, how sinful a state this? A consideration, which alone is sufficient to make the Christian weary of it, and willing to be released; especially when in *paradise* this imperfection shall be done away. *Blessed are the dead for they rest from their labours*; from all their exercises and sorrows; and particularly from those of a sinful, sinning nature. O glorious rest! the prospect of which is enough to begin a triumph, and make the devout soul cry for the wings of a dove. “ If an
“ angel from heaven, says one, should assure
“ an holy man, that from such a moment he
“ should sin no more; what joy would it fill
“ him with? The world would not be big enough

“ to hold such a soul.” Well, death is such an angel, such a messenger, it comes with this assurance to the Christian ; its errand is to carry him to *paradise*, where he shall neither sin, nor suffer any more for ever. O my soul ! believe this, and learn to correct thy sentiments of dying ; thy style with reference to it ; to think and speak of death more agreeably to Christian principles. How common is it to say, even in the case of a Christian, *he is dead, poor man !* but why *poor man* ? When death is his perfection, his life and his glory. O my God ! strengthen my faith, help me to fix my eyes on *paradise* ; to be more conversant in the land of promise and rest ; and I shall grow out of love with this wilderness, and not fear the waters of *Jordan*. *A good man should only need leave to die !*

4thly. Infer, O my soul ! the folly and madness of those, who for the *shadow and dream* of an earthly happiness, deprive themselves of the joys of *paradise* : I call it a shadow, a dream, for it is no better. All who have tried the experiment, and sought an happiness here below, have felt the delusion, and found the disappointment. The state of our present enjoyments is not pure enough to afford happiness ; they are adulterated and mixed. There is a sorrow interwoven with our comforts ; a sting in the tail of our delights ; and then how uncertain ? How frequently interrupted ? How momentary and fading ? Shouldest thou, O my soul ! place thy happiness in bodily pleasures, these will be soon gone ; distempers or age will take away the relish of them ; the evil days will come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt be forced to say, these are no pleasures ; and then death

will make an eternal separation. Are riches, honours, &c. thy bait, the phantom thou embracest, under the name and notion of happiness? As they cannot satisfy, while thou hast them, so thou canst not keep them. This scheme of things, *the fashion of this world* passeth away in a few years at most, thou must resign thy breath and life; and then whose shall these things be? And where will that happiness be that depends thereon? O my soul! dread the thoughts of such imposture. Was there no other, no better happiness, it would be no crime to chuse what is present, and make the best thou canst of it: But to prefer it to *paradise*, chuse it instead of God and heaven, and all the blessings of a future, eternal state, is something that wants a name: It is a degree of madness that no heart can fully conceive, no words express, but will appear hereafter in a proper light; appear to the utter shame and amazement of poor deluded creatures: And, no doubt, reflection hereupon will be one ingredient in their hell. “For *how short* a pleasure,” says he, “have I parted with a kingdom,” that sold it in his extremity for a drink of water? I had, says the sinner, the offers of life, the joys of heaven proposed to me; but I sold my birth-right for a mess of pottage! *I might have been an angel, but I would be a brute; and now I am become a devil!* How will such thoughts distress the mind, and inrage the flames of hell? Lord save me from so fatal a mistake; help me so to chuse now, as that I may approve hereafter.

*An eighth Meditation on HEAVEN.**The CONSOLATION.*

AND is there so certain a prospect of such glorious things? Solace thyself, O my soul! therein; let the hope of *paradise* ease thy complaint, and lessen thy burden. When Christ was fortifying his disciples against sorrow and desertion; *let not your hearts*, saith he, *be troubled*: He immediately adds, as an antidote against trouble, *in my father's house are many mansions*, John xiv. 1, 2. And I find him elsewhere applying and using his own doctrine for the same purpose: *For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame*, Heb. xii. 2. Believe, O my soul! these mansions; set thy Lord's joy before thee; let faith and hope take hold of that which is within the vail, and they will be an anchor to thee, keep thee stedfast in the midst of the storms of a tempestuous world: Whatever thy present exercises be, from the world, from the body, from sin, from satan; *paradise* will end all, and make amends for all: There is no more death, no more night, darkness, or tears in that world. Indeed *paradise* is future, but it is certain and near; faith can set thee beyond this intervening *almost nothing* of time, realize and presentiate it to thee: And who that believes *that* it is, and knows in any measure *what* it is, would make any great account of present grievances? I reckon, saith the apostle, *that the sufferings of the present time* (τὰ νῦν καί τε, of the now of time, this flowing, passing instant) *are not worthy to be compared*

with the glory that shall be revealed, Rom. viii. 18. O my soul! state and balance accounts between this world and that; these sorrows, and those joys. Think often how little the one, how great the other; how short the one, how lasting the other. And let thy future hopes quiet thee under present sorrows. It was thought an indecency, as not comporting with his quality and relation, for a *King's son* to look lean from day to day, 2 *Sam.* xiii. 4. And shall the sons of the king of heaven, the destined and appointed heirs of an eternal *paradise*, suffer every little grievance to ruffle and discompose them? This, O my soul! is unworthy of thy hopes; the remembrance of which, did that state admit any such resentments, would make thee blush in *paradise*. "What thoughts," saith the martyr, "shall we have of the sufferings of this life, when we have reigned thousands of years with Christ in glory!" It is easy to imagine what thoughts we shall have *then*; may I have somewhat the like thoughts *now*. Help me, O my God, to converse more above, and I shall less regard what passes here below. *This present is a light affliction, and but for a moment: That an exceeding, a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.* May I believe it; live in the hopes of it; and not only be patient, but joyful in tribulation!

The SOLILOQUY and COMPLAINT.

WHAT cause, O my soul! to lament the neglect and mistake of happiness! the neglect of *paradise*, and the fatal mistake of seeking an happiness here below? How common this, even

among Christians ; who yet profess to believe a *paradise* ; who have admitted it into their creed, as an article of their faith ? How few, who seem to have any true regard and reference to that state ? Most (as was said of the *Jews*, with respect to *Canaan*, the typical *paradise*) *despise the pleasant land*, Psal. cvi. 24. and are manifestly in their temper and frame carnal and sensual, minding earthly things. This has been the manner of the greatest part of the world ; it is well if I may not say of the church : They are still hovering over this earth, pursuing an happiness in and from the creature ; and this, after all former attempts in the same way have been utterly baffled : No warnings will take effect with us. O wretched case ! strange infatuation of unthinking men ! “ The experience
“ of almost six thousand years, one would think
“ (to borrow the words of a worthy person)
“ sufficient to testify the incompetency of every
“ worldly thing, to make men happy : That the
“ pleasing of ourselves, and the gratification of
“ our animal part, is not blessedness ; that men
“ are still left unsatisfied notwithstanding. But
“ the practice and course of the world is such ;
“ as if this were some late and rare experiment,
“ which, for curiosity, every one must be trying
“ over again : Every age renews the inquiry
“ after an earthly felicity ; the design is entailed (as the *Spanish* designs are said to be)
“ and reinforced with as great confidence and
“ vigour from age to age, as if none had been
“ defeated in it before, or that it was very
“ likely to take at last. Had this been alone the
“ folly of the first age, it had admitted some excuse : But that the world should still be cheated by the same, so oft repeated impostures,

“ presents us with a sad prospect of the deplo-
“ rable state of mankind : *This their way is their*
“ *folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings,*
“ Psal. xlix. The wearied wits, and wasted
“ estates laid out upon the philosopher’s stone,
“ afford but a faint, defective representation of
“ this case. What *Chemistry* can extract heaven
“ out of a clod of clay ? What art can make
“ blessedness spring, and grow out of this cold
“ earth ? If all created nature be vexed and tor-
“ tured never so long, who can expect this
“ *Elixir* ? Yet after so many frustrated attempts,
“ so much time and labour lost, men are still
“ as eagerly and vainly busy as ever ; are per-
“ petually tossed by unsatisfied desires, labour-
“ ing in the fire, wearying themselves for every
“ vanity, distracted by the uncertain, and often
“ contrary motions of a ravenous appetite and a
“ blind mind, and would be happy, and know
“ not how.” And this they do with a neglect,
and too often a contempt of the only possible
happiness, clearly set before them, and freely
tendered to them : they pretend to be in quest
of felicity, and yet run away from it. O my
soul ! drop a compassionate tear over the follies
of the human race, who are thus hurried on even
to destruction, by an old, and unknown delusion,
dashing upon the same rock, so many myriads
before them have split upon ; who have (some
of them at least) confessed the cheat, and left
behind them pillars and monuments of warning
to posterity.

Bewail, O my-soul ! this woful stupidity of
thy fellow-creatures ; bewail thy own stupidity
herein. How hast thou been caught in the
snare, been hankering after the creature, covet-
ing the accursed thing : And after thou hast set

thy face as if thou wouldest leave and withdraw from this earth, how prone to look back? How little hast thou minded that heaven thou pretendest to have chosen? How much estranged from the glorious *paradise* above, in thy thoughts, desires and affections! It would seem, by the accounts we have of the first Christians, that they had so lively an expectation of *paradise*, and were so much taken up with it, that they could think or speak of scarce any thing else: *The kingdom*, the (heavenly) kingdom, was so much in their mouth, that their enemies, misapprehending them, accused them of treasonable designs against the empire: Nay, so much were their affections gone from this world, that they could scarce wait their appointed time in it: They reckoned with that good man, that every day spent on earth was a day lost in heaven, and therefore (not without fault oftentimes) courted death. "Being inflamed, saith * *Justin Martyr*, <sup>* *Apol.*
second.</sup> "with the desire of a pure and eternal life, we "breathe after an intimate converse with God, "the great parent and creator of the world; and "make haste to seal our confession with our "blood." But how little of this spirit is to be found among the Christians of our day? We are for *stocks* and treasures here on earth (on any terms,) but how coolly do we pursue treasure in heaven? With most it is quite out of sight, and as much out of mind; everlasting life stands in our bibles and creeds, but has little place in our hearts. O my soul! bewail thy own share in this guilt; weep over the woful frame of thy carnal heart: How languid thy affections; how slow thy motion towards heaven! insomuch, that sometimes it remains a matter of just suspicion with thee, whether thou really intendest it or not.

Lord, pity me under my frequent and great infirmities; give my affections a stronger biass, a more constant bent towards thyself; may I never forget the blessed mansions above. Help me to love *paradise* more; to live upon it, and in it more; that this world may be less my temptation, and that my sure portion.

A ninth Meditation on HEAVEN.

The RESOLUTION.

O MY soul! secure thy interest in thy heavenly *paradise*; make good thy title; having a promise left of entering into rest, fear, lest thou shouldest seem to come short of it; labour to put the matter beyond all rational doubt. This I would endeavour, and accordingly resolve upon such measures in my after-conduct, as may be necessary and proper hereunto. Particularly,

1st. I resolve (Lord help me by thy grace) to study the evidences of this great point. I would endeavour for the faith, *which is the substance of things hoped for, and the demonstration of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. O my soul! be at some expence and pains here. The subject is worthy of thy most diligent, and serious inquiries: Endeavour to realize heaven to thyself; to get all objections and suspicions concerning it removed; and converse with such arguments and considerations as have the greatest tendency to assist and establish thy faith. *We know*, saith the apostle, *that we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, 2 Cor. v. 1. It was no question with them, whether

there was another and better world, everlasting habitations. Lord, help me to represent heaven to myself in *its certainty* and full evidence, that I may look upon it as the greatest reality, and accordingly wait for it.

2dly. As there are undoubted marks of exclusion, certain distinguishing characters of some, that shall be rejected of God and shut out of *paradise*, it shall be my care to avoid these, and keep at the greatest distance from them. *Know ye not, saith the apostle, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, —nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 2, 10.* He speaks of it, as a *known confessed thing* among Christians (which none could dispute that had any just notions of God, and acknowledged scripture-revelation) that persons of such impurity could have no title to *paradise*. The lurking hypocrite, that so artfully disguises himself, is not so easily detected; but gross sinners have a brand in their foreheads; they too visibly wear the devil's livery to be overlooked. Guard therefore, O my soul! against all approaches towards this fatal character; *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; walk not in the counsel of the ungodly.* The profane and sensual bear the marks of final rejection and reprobation, and shall as certainly perish, as if by name, proscribed for everlasting destruction.

3dly. As it is not enough that I escape the grosser pollutions there are in the world through lust, but my nature must be refined and suited to the happiness above; I humbly purpose, and resolve to make this my care: *Without holiness,*

no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14. *I must be born again*, John iii. 3. *Made meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light*, Col. i. 12. Heaven must be begun here; the seeds of a blessed immortality sown in this life: the principles of it laid in the temper and disposition of the mind. Endeavour, O my soul! to find and experience something of this; beg for the regenerating Spirit, and for farther measures thereof. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and therefore cannot enjoy heaven; that heaven which God gives, and which God is: Such as are under the power and influence of it are fundamentally disqualified for *paradise*; they want an immediate capacity; can neither relish the work, company, nor enjoyments of that state: They have not learnt the notes and hallelujahs of heaven; cannot sing the song of *Zion*. Lord, restore thy likeness, fit me for thy love, for thine embraces. If I live and die unsanctified, I shall be excluded *paradise*, not only by the law of God, but that of my own impure nature.

4thly. As the Lord of that world has right to prescribe measures of life, a rule to walk by, to all who shall partake of the blessedness of *paradise*; I resolve (Lord, help me by thy grace) to study this rule, and endeavour conformity thereto. The rule in general is the divine law; which may be considered, either as *first* given to mankind, or as given afterwards upon a change in our state and circumstances. The first law was *that* given to man in innocency, and required entire obedience without defect or failure: And this was the law our first parents were under; upon the fulfilling of which, their title to life, both in the earthly and heavenly *paradise*, depended. But this (the fulfilling of

the law, I mean) being become impossible to their guilty apostate descendants; none of them can expect heaven, or have any title to it, according to the tenour of that law. There is therefore another law more accommodated to the state and circumstances of fallen man, *viz.* *The gospel, the law of grace or of faith*, as the apostle calls it, *Rom. iii. 27.* "Which is that * *How.*
 " part of the gospel revelation that contains *Blessed-*
 " and discovers our duty, what we are to be, *ness of*
 " and to do in order to blessedness, being, as *the*
 " to the matter of it, the whole moral law be- *Right-*
 " fore appertaining to the covenant of works, *eous, p..*
 " attempered to the state of fallen sinners, by *26.*
 " evangelical mitigations and indulgences, with
 " the superadded precepts of repentance, and
 " faith in a mediator; with all the other duties
 " respecting the mediator as such; and clothed
 " with a new form, as it is now taken into the
 " constitution of the covenant of grace."

And even this law, the law of grace, may be again distinguished into the law of *sincerity*, and the law of (evangelical) *perfection*. The former, the law of *sincerity*, must be understood to require "the mere being of those gracious
 " principles with their essential acts (as there
 " is opportunity) expressed therein, in opposi-
 " tion to the nullity, or insincerity of them."
 The other, the law of perfection, requires the utmost degree of improvement in virtue or grace, which, in the several states and periods of our life, we are capable of attaining to: We are enjoined to grow in grace; to perfect holiness in the fear of God; and to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. And as the demands of these laws are diverse, so are their sanctions diverse: The law of sincerity requir-

ing the essence of divine grace, of every grace, constitutes therein the terms of salvation, and obligeth under the penalty of eternal death : Thus, faith, repentance, love, subjection, &c. are required, *John* viii. 24. *Luke* xiii. 3, 5. *Acts* iii. 19. *Cap.* v. 3. *1 Cor.* xvi. 22. 10, 11, 27.

* *Ibid* 28. *Luke* xiv. 26. He is the * author of eternal salvation to all those that obey him ; but he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the gospel ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, *Heb.* v. 3. *2 Thess.* i. 8. 9. Where it is only the sincerity of those several requisites, that is, under so severe a penalty, exacted and called for ; inasmuch as, he that is sincerely a believer, a penitent, a lover of God, or Christ, an obedient subject, is not capable of the contrary denomination ; and therefore not liable, according to the tenour of this law, to be punished as an infidel, an impenitent person, an enemy, a rebel. The law of perfection requiring constant improvements and advances, all that love, service, obedience ; all that fruitfulness, in every good word and work, watching all opportunities and occasions of doing and getting good ; and this in our whole course, with all the exactness and steadiness we are capable of : This law, I say, demanding this of us, doth not bind upon penalty of eternal damnation, farther than our neglects and miscarriages may be so gross and continued, as not to consist with *sincerity*. But the penalty here is, the hiding of God's face ; with a great variety of fatherly chastisements and castigations in this world, with the deprivation of many degrees of happiness in the other world : *He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly*, *2 Cor.* ix. 6.

Now this is the rule, the standing rule, according to which the Judge and Lord of all will proceed at last, *Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8. 16. Rev. xxii. 14.* But doth not this ascribe too much to works, making heaven the reward and result of them? I answer, it makes it the consequence of them; asserts the necessity of works in order to future happiness; which every one must own, that can look into his Bible, and hath not learned to wrangle away the plainest texts. Indeed to talk of being happy without holiness, without partaking of a divine nature, without the principles of the divine life, evidenced and expressed in a course of obedience, implies a contradiction. Notwithstanding nothing, according to this scheme, is ascribed to works derogatory to the grace of God: *The creature is still laid low, and he that glories, must glory in the Lord.* There is no merit placed in our obedience; it is of grace, and through the mediation of Christ, that the law of faith is established, and our very imperfect obedience accepted: Our faith and obedience is owing to the influence and operation of the *Paraclete*, the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, promised and given under the gospel dispensation. It is God that works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Nor is there any proportion between our mean, defective service here on earth, and the joys of *paradise*. *By grace we are saved* (finally saved, as well as brought under the gospel way of salvation): All in heaven will own this, *and cast down their crowns before the throne*, *Rev. iv. 10.*

O my soul! attend thy rule, subject thyself to the authority of thy great Lord and Master; study and live to his gospel; transcribe it in practice; observe what he has taught; parti-

cularly in his excellent sermon in the mount, concerning poverty of spirit, meekness, mercifulness, heart-purity, thirsting after righteousness, chastity, forgiving and loving enemies; concerning prayer, alms, fasting, against an anxious care and solicitude about this life, laying up treasure in heaven, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. See that thou hast the truth of every grace, that thou mayest not be condemned by the law of

*Dr.Scot. sincerity “ * He who hath so submitted his
 “ will to the will of God, as to be thoroughly
 “ resolved, without reserve, to obey him, and
 “ not to do any thing that is contrary to his
 “ will, either against knowledge, or through
 “ affected ignorance or inconsideration, hath in
 “ this resolution, the real being of all Christian
 “ graces and virtues in him (supposing the re-
 “ solution flow from a divine principle), and
 “ stands uncondemned by the law of sincerity.”

May it be thus with me; may I keep up this resolution, and accordingly practise. (Lord, assist me by thy grace, or my resolution will fail!) Now would I rest in low attainments, and be satisfied with little and weak grace, but press forward towards the mark, *adding to my faith virtue, to my virtue knowledge, &c.* Adding one degree of grace to another, that these things may be in me and abound; so that I be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Lord, quicken me in thy way; may I be always attentive, watchful and vigorous in my work, as a Christian; using all proper measures and ministeries of improvement. This is what I would propose, aim at, and endeavour. *O strengthen me by thy Spirit, with might in the inward man!*

5thly. I would also resolve to improve the several talents committed to me ; I find the sentence in the future judgment, according to our care herein, *Matt. xxv. He that hath received the five talents* and improved them, was accepted : *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, v. 21.* So he that improved his *two talents*, v. 22. whilst the other, that hid his talent in the earth, is called a *slothful, unprofitable, and wicked servant, and condemned to outer darkness, v. 30.* Consider, O my soul ! thy trust, and endeavour to be a faithful steward of the manifold gifts of God : Thou hast talents of different kinds committed to thee, *talents of nature* ; as reason, judgment, the power of choice, conscience, memory, the senses of the body, and all the faculties of the mind ; *talents of providence* ; as riches, learning, reputation, interest in the world, power and authority, health, time, &c. *talents of grace*, as I may distinguish them ; the Bible, the ministry of the word, the institutions of the gospel, the influences and operations of the holy Spirit, &c. Some of all these thou hast received ; if not five or two, at least *one* talent ; resolve to be faithful over thy few things. Lord, help me to improve all my powers and capacities, my worldly substance, my parts, time, all my interests and abilities to the honour of my great Master ; and as he has prescribed, may this be my constant care : Grant me the great blessings of a faithful conscience ; which on all occasions may admonish and direct, and do thou assist me by thy grace.

6thly. That I may be fit for the other world, I would resolve and endeavour to live more weaned from this ; more disengaged from it, and indifferent about it ; to guard against its

enchantments and flatteries, and to keep it under foot : How often has it played the impostor with me, stood glaring before my eyes in false colours ! It has looked gay at a distance ; but when I have come near, and touched it, it has, like the sensitive plant, contracted and shrivelled up into a little compass. Love not the world, O my soul ! nor the things that are in the world ; get it crucified by the cross of Christ ! Lord, anoint my eyes with eye-salve, that I may see more clearly *that* world, which is afar off, and see the emptiness of this ; look it into darkness, a shadow, and nothing !

7thly. I would endeavour ; be resolved herein, O my soul ! (Lord, assist me by thy grace) to intend this, the securing my interest in *paradise*, as *my great and main work*, the governing concern of life : It is the one thing needful, the τὸ ἔργον of a Christian, his most important affair, to which every thing else must be subordinate : *Strive*, saith Christ, *to enter in at the strait gate*, Luke xiii. 24. The word he uses (Ἀγωνίζεσθαι) is borrowed from the *Olympic* games, and notes an earnestness, like that with which the combatants there contended for the prize. And to the same purpose, 2 *Pet.* i. 10. *Give all diligence*. And this was exemplified in the practice of the primitive Christians, 2 *Cor.* v. 9. *Phil.* iii. 12, 13, 14. May this be the constant bent and temper of my mind : And whenever my zeal begins to cool, and I grow more indifferent about the concerns of my soul, may I not rest in so dangerous a frame. O quicken me in thy good way ; help me to fix my eye upon the goal (the mark) ; *may I be stedfast, unmoveable in the work of the Lord*.

8thly. I resolve (Lord, help me by thy grace)

frequently to inquire into my state, to examine my heart, frame, conduct, and bring all under censure; which sometimes I would attempt with more vigour and solemnity. Be faithful, O my soul, herein! Do not live a stranger to thyself; often put such questions as these to thyself: “ Upon what terms do I stand with God and
“ conscience? What hope of heaven? What
“ foundation for my hope? What meetness for
“ *paradise*? Should I die this year, month, or
“ week, should I die in the Lord, and enter into
“ the joy of my Lord?” Thus shall my spirit make diligent search; Lord, direct and prosper me in my work.

9thly. Whatever I find matter of disquietude, of uneasiness and reasonable fear to me, on the account of which, I am ready to question my state; I resolve not to cease till I have it removed: If a head-strong lust and corruption, I will endeavour its mortification; if want or weakness of grace, neglects, omissions, aversion to spiritual work and converse, unsuitableness of heart and frame to *paradise*, &c. It shall be my care to get this matter set right; the cause of complaint taken away: Lord, establish my purposes, and succeed with thy blessing.

10thly. I would sometimes make a more vigorous effort towards heaven, raising the heart and affections as near it as I can; endeavouring to abstract and withdraw from the body, and mix awhile with the inhabitants of *paradise*. As this is done in a lower degree, *often*, in the course of a devout Christian’s life, in meditation, prayer, sacraments, &c. So it should now and then be attempted in farther measures; the soul set apart for intercourse with God and heaven; as on a day of secret humiliation or thanksgiving.

Lord, may I be acquainted with such employment, such blessed work, know more of communion with thyself; and therein foretaste more of the pleasures of *paradise*. This is the way to secure thy interest, O my soul! in heaven, and to have an abundant entrance administered into it.

11thly. As the mediation of Christ is the ground of my claim, and foundation of my title, and of all my hopes of *paradise*, I would constantly depend thereon, and constantly plead the atonement he has made. May I look to him for daily pardon and peace, and farther acceptance, *Eph. i. 7.*

These, O my God! are the humble purposes and resolutions of my soul; establish and confirm them: Keep these things for ever upon the imaginations of the thoughts of my heart. I commit my way unto thee, resigning myself to the conduct of thy grace and Spirit: Grant me thy presence and favour here, thy heaven hereafter, and as to the rest, the lower, lesser things of this little world, I insist on nothing: What thou wilt, as thou wilt. *Deus meus et omnia*, My God is my all.

A Meditation on the Love of CHRIST.

Rev. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us.*

THE mystery of redemption is a mystery of love; so the scripture represents it, every where celebrating the love of the Father and the Son, in this great and glorious work: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*, John iii. 16. *In this was manifested the love of*

God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, 1 John iv. 9, 10. Walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us——Eph. v. 2. Christ loved the church, and gave himself, &c. Eph. v. 22. Christ hath loved the church. And so eminent and signal his love, that it is made his character and description : Through him that hath loved us, Rom. viii. 37. To him that loved us, Rev. i. 5. To him ; it is not said who he is ; he is not distinguished by any proper name ; and yet what is said of him is a sufficient designation of the person intended, was there nothing more : Him that loved us. He hath loved, and so loved, as never any did ; love is his name, and love his memorial in the church for ever.

O my soul ! contemplate this glorious subject, the love of thy Redeemer. Lord, help me by thy grace ; enlighten, enliven, scatter the clouds that too often, and even now, alas ! overspread my mind. Give me a more distinct apprehension, a clearer view of thy love, thy wondrous love ; touch a dead and dull heart ; tune my earthly affections ; raise them to a more suitable pitch, that I may feel the power and influence of the subject I have before me. *Awake, O my soul ! awake psaltery and harp, awake every faculty, all that is within me be stirred up : While I am musing may the fire burn.*

As the whole doctrine concerning Christ, his person, offices, mediation, and so his *love* in all, is owing to revelation ; we must from thence derive our notions, and thereby regulate our conceptions and discourses about them. Let me

therefore view the present subject in the glass of the scripture; of the gospel particularly, which alone can shew it in a true and proper light.

And here are two things I shall propose to myself, briefly to consider; *what this love is*, what sort of a love; and *wherein it appears*, and is expressed.

I. *What this love is.* And (1st.) I find compassion and bounty included in the scripture notion of it: Love, in us, has generally a great deal of selfishness in it; we are sensible of a penury and want in our own beings, and therefore seek some augmentation, or addition by union with the object we love: Either there is something agreeable and beneficial in the object, that recommends it to our esteem, and engages our affections; or we are laid under obligations by the love, friendship, &c. of those we love, and therefore love, because we are first loved. But the love of Christ is not this way excited; we had neither done any thing to oblige him, nor have we any thing that could engage him, any farther than the misery, he saw us involved in, might move him: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*, 1 John iv. 10. Which is equally true of the Father and of the Son.

2dly. It is a free, generous, heroic love, like that of some great and public benefactor, who, touched with the miseries and distresses of mankind, undertakes their relief. *When we were without strength, ungodly, sinners, enemies, Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 6, 8, 10. The fall had impoverished us, brought us under a curse, and the sentence of death; the love of Christ ransomed us: *If one died for all, then were all dead*, 2 Cor. v. 14.

3dly. And how great, as well as free this love! No instance of human love can equal it; The highest *that* ever rose, was for one friend to die for another (as in the case of *Damon and Pythias*): *Greater love hath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friends*, John xv. 13. But greater love hath *God-Man*, who laid down his life for enemies.

4thly. It is a love beyond all thought and conception of ours; as the *apostle* intimates, *Eph.* iii. 18, 19. That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ; he adds, *which passeth knowledge*. It is above our understanding; we cannot find it out to perfection; we know not the full dignity of his person, the greatness of his condescension; and therefore cannot pretend to measure his love in its utmost latitude; on which account, it may be, the *apostle* ascribes a four-fold dimension to it.

But why doth he desire the *Ephesians* might comprehend it, and that *with all saints*, if it really passeth knowledge, and cannot be so comprehended? I answer, all the saints study it, search into it, and endeavour to comprehend more and more of it: Something they know, more they desire to know; they stoop down with the angels, and look into these things; they are *comprehending*; and though they have not already attained, they are pressing forward towards the mark. Now the *apostle* prays for the *Ephesians*, that the same mind may be in them, that they may, with all saints, study this love. And, O my soul! join thou in the subject; nothing more worthy of thy inquiries; Lord, shed abroad thy love in my heart; let

Christ dwell there by faith, that I being rooted and grounded in love, may better understand and take in more of the love of my Redeemer.

A second Meditation on the Love of CHRIST.

II. HAVING on another occasion spent some little time in meditating upon the love of Christ; where I considered what is included in the notion of his love, I now return to the subject; Lord; deliver my thoughts from their usual barrenness, my mind from distraction and vanity, and tune my heart for this blessed work!

I am to inquire into the justice of this character; *he that has loved us*, and consider wherein he hath manifested his love: And (1st.) How readily did he undertake for poor sinners, in that stipulation between the Father and him, which *divines* call the covenant of redemption! The wisdom of God, as lawgiver and governor, insisted upon an atonement for sin: Some honourable expedient upon which he might forgive sin, and treat with sinners, with a *salvo* to all his perfections, and to the authority of his own law; *might appear just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*, Rom. iii. 26. This expedient, in short, was, that the Son should take our nature, and therein die a victim, which he consented to with all cheerfulness: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, then, said I, lo, I come, in the volume of thy book it is written of me*, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. He said it by way of compliance with the Father's proposal and demand. The matter was brought to a solemn contract between them, as seems implied, and therefore it is represented as written in a *volume*,

“ Which,” says a * learned man, “ is no other * Dr.
 “ thing than a bill, or roll of contract between *Ilan-*
 “ God the Father and Christ; wherein is sup-^{mond.}
 “ posed to be written the agreement, prepara-
 “ tory to that great work of Christ’s incarna-
 “ tion: Wherein he undertaking perfectly to
 “ fulfil the will of God, to perform all active,
 “ and also all passive obedience, even unto
 “ death, had the promise from God, that he
 “ should become the author of eternal salvation
 “ to all that obey him.” The scripture gives
 “ several intimations elsewhere of such a cove-
 “ nant (though we have not its precise form
 “ and plan, nor all the articles of it), as *Psalm*
lxxxix. 19, 28, 29. I have laid help upon one that
is mighty; my mercy will I keep for him for ever,
and my covenant shall stand fast with him; his
seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne
as the days of heaven. The Father promised to
 him a numerous and glorious progeny: *The*
heathen for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of
the earth for his possession. This was the stipu-
 lation, the statute and decree of God concern-
 ing him, *Psal. ii. 7, 8.* But then he must be
 their help, *Psal. lxxxix. 19.* Must himself be-
 come their sacrifice, and save by dying, *When*
thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall
see his seed, he shall see of the travail of his soul,
and be satisfied, Isa. liii. 10, 11. His soul must
 travail, and then be satisfied.

Now here my kind and gracious Redeemer
 consents; freely and cheerfully offers himself;
lo, I come, saith he, *I delight to do thy will, O*
God, thy law is within my heart. He knew what
 the will of God was, *viz.* that instead of legal
 sacrifices, altogether insufficient for so great a
 service as our redemption, he must be made a

sacrifice ; a body was prepared, which he must live in, die in : And this he submits to with delight, rejoicing in the prospect of relieving and succouring perishing sinners, upon these severe terms, *Prov. viii. 31.* And who can fathom, who can estimate this love ?

2dly. And how strange an instance of love his *incarnation* in pursuance of the fore-mentioned engagements ! *In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,* Gal. iv. 4. *He sent him forth,* as was proposed and agreed : Christ had said, *lo, I come ;* and he did not fail ; would not draw back : *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,* John i. 14. *Made flesh ;* amazing condescension ! Suppose one of the angels, who stands in the presence of God ; a bright seraph should, for the sake of some special service to a number of us mortals, have left the regions of bliss, and have taken up his dwelling in a human body ; been united to such a lump of earth, and been united to its laws ; how should we celebrate such an act of kindness and generosity ! We should be often speaking of, and extolling our good angel. But, O my soul ! here is greater love, a lower stoop ; thy Redeemer, more excellent than the angels, has done this : He has loved thee ; so loved thee, as to become a man like thee : The Son of God became the son of man, that thou mightest be advanced to the dignity of a son of God.

Nor was the condescension notional, that needs the help of nice and subtle distinctions, and the art of words to make it something ; but it was a real and proper condescension : He laid aside a *glory he had with the Father before the world was,* John xvii. 5. *Was in the form of God,* but emptied himself, and took upon him

the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 6, 7. Love brought him from heaven to earth; humbled him to the state of an infant! And what manner of love this! *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, saith the apostle; *that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor*, 2 Cor. viii. 9. We know something of his grace; know that it is grace, great grace: but how great, we know not. Adore, O my soul! When thou understandest better, thou wilt love more and praise better. *The Word, with God, became Immanuel, God with us.*

3dly. Nor did he only become man, but was born in circumstances of great outward meanness. His mother, though of the royal line of *David*, yet was of a family, at that time, very much reduced. Witness her being espoused to a carpenter: Witness her being thrust out into a stable at the inn of *Bethlehem*. It is indeed said, *there was no room for them in the inn*, Luke ii. 7. But, no question, had she made any considerable figure, some or other would have complimented him with an apartment, or offered them to share with them in their accommodations; but nothing of this civility is shewn them: She is forced to shift for herself, and lodge in an outhouse with the cattle: And there she brings forth her Son, wraps him in swaddling clothes, and lays him in a manger. Witness her offering at the time of her purification; which was two young pigeons, the sacrifice the law allowed for those that could not offer a lamb, *Lev. xii. 6. 8. Luke ii. 24.*

And what condescension and grace was here! Blessed Lord! that thou shouldst consent to be born for me, and thus born! Thy chamber of state a stable; thy cradle a manger, or

cratch ! What a stir and bustle do we often see at the birth of a poor worm ! what a pompous *apparatus*, and preparation for lying-in ! what attendance and ceremony, what addresses, flat-teries upon the birth, especially if it be of one of these little creatures we call an heir ! And yet, behold ! the Son of God, heir of all things, whom all the angels of God worship, comes into the world in this obscurity ! O my soul ! view thy Lord in this abasement, and infer thence the height of love ; learn to admire his love and imitate his humility. Some of the devouter *Papists* have a way of devoting themselves to the *Holy Infancy* of Christ, (as they call it :) There may be a great deal of humour and superstition in that ; but certainly we may (with much advantage) study, and devoutly contemplate his infancy, which so loudly proclaims love, and preaches humility. Look, O my soul ! to the manger of Christ, and learn to despise the pomps and vanities of this world. Look to the manger of Christ, and adore the love that brought him thither, and laid him there.

4thly. And how great an argument of love may we find, in the condition and manner of his life ? He was not only known and distinguished as the *Carpenter's Son*, but it seems served a sort of an apprenticeship to the carpenter's trade. Hence they call him *the Carpenter*, Mark. vi. 3. The Son of God, handling the ax and the plane ! subject to a poor artizan, as his father and master, *Luke* ii. 51. working as an ordinary mechanic for his bread ! O my God, thy love overpowers ! language here is swallowed up. Adore, O my soul ! in wonder and silence adore.

When he entered upon the stage of public action, he still appeared under the same diminu-

tion, and in circumstances of low abasement: He had neither house to live in, nor estate to live upon; but was beholden to the hospitality of his friends, and subsisted by their charity: *The Son of Man*, saith he, *hath not where to lay his head*, Matt. viii. 20. Certain women, we read, *ministered to him of their substance*, Luke viii. 3. And how was he lessened and villified as to his moral character? He is traduced as a deceiver, a madman, a traitor, a blasphemer, a conjurer, a confederate with devils: Thus he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*, Heb. xii. 3. Of sinners, for whom he had the kindest designs, and for whom he was doing the kindest things. Strange mysterious love, that reconciled him to such treatment! He foresaw it, and yet submitted to it; knew what he must expect from the children of men, and yet the prospect of the great salvation he should accomplish for them, made him delight to be among them, *Prov. viii. 31.* Lord, may I never forget thy love; never think much of contempt, reproach, poverty, and persecution for thy sake!

5thly. And what shall I say of his love in dying; herein the scripture lays the greatest stress of all: *To him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood.* So *Eph. v. 2.* *Christ loved us, and gave himself a sacrifice.* Had he only assumed our nature, to have lived in it, in all the ease, honour and grandeur, that human affairs will permit; never to have felt a troublesome moment; and afterwards have been translated to heaven in a fiery chariot, with the acclamations of attending angels; there had been great condescension, even in this; but to take a body on purpose to suffer, to be pierced, wounded, broken; to languish, bleed and die; to be made

a man, that he might be *a man of sorrows*, Isa. liii. 3. This strangely enhances his love, and raises it above all comprehension. Take a view, O my soul! of the last scene, so full of tragedy and amazement; follow him to *Golgotha*; behold him prostrate in the garden, praying *more earnestly* in his agony; sweating drops of blood; hear him crying out, *my soul is exceeding sorrowful, sore amazed: If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* And read his love in tears, and groans, and blood. When the *Jews* saw him weeping over the grave, as it were of *Lazarus*, Behold, say they, *how he loved him*, John xi. 36. Much more reason have I to remark this, when I see him, not only weeping over, but dying for lost sinners.

6thly. Nor did his love terminate an end with his death: His government, as head and Lord of the church, is a government of grace and love: There is a vein of love running through every dispensation, and filling every scene of his providence. What glorious displays of love towards sinners, in their first conversion, oftentimes! and in his after-conduct of them! The apostle reflecting on his own case, that he obtained mercy, cries out, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant; and in me he shewed all long-suffering, as a pattern to them that should hereafter believe*, 1 Tim. i. 13, 16. This was a sort of a specimen of his dealings with other injurious, obstinate sinners. O my soul! never forget the like instances of thy Redeemer's love towards thyself. How long did he wait to be gracious! And in what methods of rich and sovereign grace did he at last subdue, and reclaim thee? O, adore the love that

has saved thee! The review of this grace will be part of thy heaven hereafter; will supply thy song to everlasting; now begin thy eternal work. And how wonderful the history of his love; since with the prodigal, he brought thee back to thy Father's house? *He that loveth me, saith Christ, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him*, John xiv. 21. He not only *hath* loved, but *will* love, continue to love; and as an evidence of it manifest himself to those he loves; guiding, restoring, supporting, quickening, comforting them; *he brings them to his banqueting house, where his banner over them is love*; He *satisfieth them with the fatness of his house*, and makes them drink of the *rivers of his pleasure*: He gathers them in his arms, and carries them in his bosom; follows them with a constant tender care: And as he *washed them for their sins in his own blood*, he doth, in virtue thereof, intercede for them above, and play the *Advocate*, in their behalf, *with the Father*, 1 John ii. 1. Heb. ii. 18.—4. 15. He knows and pities their infirmities, sympathizes with them in their temptations, sufferings and conflicts.

7thly. Heaven is the preparation of his love; and indeed, it is there only that we shall understand how great his love is; when we see it in its last scene, and final issue. *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, Eph. v. 25. 27. This is what he aimed at in coming from heaven, *viz.* that he might advance his servants and followers thither: He *entered heaven as our fore-runner*, Heb. vi. 20. And tells us, he went to prepare a place for us; and that he will come

again and receive us to himself, *that where he is, there we may be also*, John xiv. 23. Heaven is the price of his blood (*the purchased possession*) and the fruit of his love : They in heaven clearly see the dueness of his character, *him that loved us*, and accordingly own and adore him for ever.

And thus I have traced the subject, the love of my dearest Lord, through several of its more remarkable instances. Look back, O my soul ! upon them ; till thou feelest the power, the constraining power of divine love : And Lord, look down upon me with a pitying, relieving, helping eye ; dart a beam of thy own light ; afford a touch of thy own divine hand, that I may understand and feel thy love.

A third Meditation on the love of CHRIST.

AND is this the love of my Redeemer ! has he loved us, and thus loved us ! How great is thy obligations, O my soul ! to love him ! Love begets love ; all ingenious minds find it so : And indeed it generally softens the hardest hearts, and overcomes the most untractable natures that are least capable of the tender impressions of love. How was *Saul*, even in the midst of his rage against *David*, subdued by an instance of his generous kindness ? *Is this the voice of my Son David ? And Saul lift up his voice and wept. And he said unto David, thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil : And thou hast shewed me this day, how that thou hast dealt well with me : Forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a*

man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good, for that thou hast done unto me this day, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17, 18, 19. Love is the most powerful orator; it has irresistible charms; can melt down an enemy, and carry all captive before it. And, O my soul! canst thou stand out against the force of this love? the most amazing, glorious, triumphant love! Shall an obdurate, abandoned *Saul* relent, upon a small expression of *David's* goodness; and dost thou remain untouched with a redeemer's love, in all the surprising instances of it? Canst thou pass through such an history of love, transcendent, unparalleled love, and not be moved, not transported! Lord, pity my stupidity, and cure it; break this rock; *take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh.*

Lament, O my soul! the want of love, where it is so much due, and so well deserved. How do we find ourselves obliged, by a small favour from our fellow creatures? And if they heap benefits upon us, and repeat kindnesses, they make us their property; we are so much theirs, that we are scarce any longer our own: But, alas! the love of my Redeemer has not had this effect; though it be the greatest, and most beneficial, free, generous, and what carries it in infinite obligations; how little influence has it had upon me! how little do I feel its power! Wretch that I am! any low instance of love has more force and authority with me, than that love, which is the wonder and song of saints and seraphs: Bewail this obduracy and insensibility. It is said of a good man, that often appeared disconsolate, and would sometimes, in company, let fall tears; that being asked the reason, he answered, *I cannot bring this vile heart of mine to love the*

Lord Jesus. Weep, O my soul! over thy vile heart; herein vile above measure, that it can throw away affections upon every worthless object, but has none for a Redeemer; will not be brought to love the Lord Jesus.

Stir up thyself, O my soul! and turn thy affections into their proper channel; direct them to their proper object; let the love of Christ constrain thee; he has every thing that may invite and engage thy strongest affections. For instance, how amiable and excellent his person: This is represented in the book of *Canticles*, in a variety of metaphors, suitable to the nature of that song; and made one reason of that love, which all ought to have, and all truly devout souls actually have, in a greater, or less degree, to their Lord and husband. *I am the rose of Sharon*, saith he, *and the lily of the valleys*, Chap. ii. 1. *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood*, adds the spouse, *so is my beloved among*

* Bp. Pat. *the sons*, v. 3. q. d. “* ‘Thou art more lovely in
in loc. “my eyes than the greatest princes in the
“world, who are no more to be compared with
“thee, than the wild trees, that bring forth no-
“thing but leaves, or only harsh and insipid
“trash, with the goodly apple-tree, when it is
“loaden with its beautiful and pleasant fruit.”

And after a great many affectionate touches upon his character, the enamoured spouse attempts a more particular and distinct description of him, Chap. v. ver. 10,—16. first promising, that *he is chiefest of ten thousands*; and then concluding, *he is altogether lovely*. “† She
† Pat. “finding his praises to exceed all her thoughts,
“sums up all in a breath, and comprehends his
“whole character in this, *That he is all over*
“*lovely*; attracting all men’s affections; not

“ only those that saw him, but those that heard
“ of him too.” View, O my soul! his excellencies; consider the wisdom of his doctrine, the goodness of his laws, the grace of his government; his mediatorial qualifications and accomplishments; his authority as prophet, priest and king; and *in all*, his fitness to be the head, protector, and Saviour of the body: *In him all fulness dwells*: He is made of God unto us wisdom righteousness, sanctification and redemption; that he which glorieth, should glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 20, 31. View him, O my soul! in his essential and mediatorial excellency, as the glorious *Immanuel*, as made man, tabernacling in a human body; as invested in the most beneficent office; speaking from the bosom of the Father, and speaking as never man did. View him in the several steps of his humiliation and triumph; in all the acts of his power, faithfulness and grace; and thou wilt be convinced, that at least, thou oughtest to love him; wilt condemn thyself if thou love him not; and hereby wilt learn to love him, and more to love him. Vouchsafe, Lord, to be my teacher, and kindle the sacred flame of love in my breast.

And as his person is amiable, so his love recommends; How great was that! how expensive! how beneficial! *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests, to God and his Father*, Rev. i. 5, 6, washed us in his blood! in his own blood! Stop here, pause a little: What love is this? He hath loved; heaven must tell thee *how*, explain the mode. But shall this love, O my soul! have no effect; make no impressions? If so, thou seemest past cure; hast the heart of a stone, of a devil; forfeitest thy very being, thy power of

living, and deservest immediate annihilation ! He hath loved me, and died for me, became my atonement, sacrifice and ransom ; hath rescued me from hell, raised my hopes as high as heaven ; hath paid my debt, knocked off my chains, distinguished and enriched me with high and noble privileges, at present ; and purchased for me an eternal crown ! And shall I not love him ? I had almost said, let me not love thee, if I love thee not !

And should it have no weight with thee, that this is the charter of Christ's spouse, of all the genuine members of his church ; the goodly fellowship of saints, as well as army of martyrs, *that they love him ? The virgins love thee, the upright love thee*, Cant. i. 3. 4. And in the 7th verse, *O thou, whom my soul loveth*. The language of the church, representing the heart and spirit of a Christian : Christ is his BELOVED ; him whom his soul loveth, loveth ardently, and above all creatures, or creature-enjoyment. O my soul ! join with these pure, chaste, divine lovers ; do not exclude thyself from this honourable *chorus* : It is a sad mark of reprobation, and exposes to a tremendous judgment, to want the affection that is inseparable from the spouse of Christ : *If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha*.

Consider farther, how pleasing this affection to the blessed Jesus ; weak, low, and languid as it is. Notwithstanding all its defects, he accepts it, and even glories in it. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse ! thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse ! how much better is thy love than wine, and the smell of thy ointments than all spices*, Cant. iv.

9, 10, &c. Infinite condescension and grace! And shall thy great Lord thus esteem, thus value thy love? And wilt thou deny it to him! O my soul! devote thyself, thy best powers and affections to the honour of thy Redeemer; love him with all thy heart, and strength, and mind.

A fourth Meditation on the Love of
CHRIST.

I HAVE seen how reasonable it is I should love *Christ*. Endeavour, O my soul! to give proof of thy love; express it in all proper instances. His love was not idle and unactive; *he loved, and washed us from our sins in his blood*. Let thy love manifest itself to him in suitable expressions: Show thy love (1st,) by high and honourable thoughts of him. When the spouse was asked, *what is thy beloved more than another beloved?* She replies; *my beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; his head is as the most fine gold, &c. his mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely*: Concluding triumphantly, and by way of challenge: *This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem*, Cant. v. 10.—18. Estimation is the ground of love; and it is one way of discovering it. O, exalt the Lord-Redeemer in thy thoughts; treat him with all reverence and veneration.

2dly. By devout ascriptions: *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion*, Rev. i. 5, 6. And again, Chap. v. 12. *Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, and*

wisdom, &c. Acknowledge the dueuess of all the honour the Son of God has received ; join with the church in her praises ; let thy love this way vent itself. Prostrate thyself before the throne of the lamb ; he is thy Lord, worship thou him.

3dly. Show it by fervent desires after his presence, and after intercourse with him : How much of this there is in the temper of devout souls, they themselves feel better than they can tell to others. It is one main design of the book of *Canticles* * to represent this : The spouse exemplifies it in an eminent manner, when she enters upon the conference, which she begins in a flame of sacred affection, continued in a great degree through that song. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.* *Him* ; she doth not say who ; but means the person in her heart ; him whom her soul loved : And whom her thoughts were upon, last upon, now upon, and frequently upon.” “ *Solomon* (as the “ pious and excellent Dr. *Patrick* observes) “ speaks this in the person of the virgin, daughter of *Sion* (*i. e.*) the church ; whom he

* Whatever reference this book may have to the coming of the *Messiah* in the flesh ; which *Solomon*, in a prophetic rapture foresaw, and to the desires of the *Jewish* church after that blessing, which he here describes in terms of affection, suitable to so great an event, and the glorious privileges thereby brought to the church : Yet, I doubt not, the inspiring Spirit looked farther, and designed to represent the spiritual intercourse there is between Christ and the church, the heavenly bridegroom and devout souls, even to the end of the world ; which is done in a divine song, formed after the manner of a pastoral eclogue, and in a sort of dramatic poem ; wherein several persons are introduced, bearing their part by turns, in several interlocutions, or divine dialogues.

“ here introduces, in the most passionate strain,
“ wishing for some token of love, which is expressed under the metaphor of a kiss. But
“ there is no mention at all made of the name,
“ condition, or beauty of the person, whose
“ love is desired ; nor any account given of the
“ beginning or progress of this desire. But he
“ makes her burst out on a sudden, and abruptly
“ into these words ; *let him kiss me, &c.* That
“ he might the more artificially describe the
“ nature and force of divine love ; which, when
“ it possesses the mind, snatches it from itself,
“ that it is wholly in him that it loves : It thinks
“ of nothing else, seeks nothing, wishes nothing,
“ speaks of nothing but this alone ; and imagines
“ that every body else thinks of the same,
“ and knows of whom it speaks.” Divine love
this way worketh towards its object : *Christ dwelleth in the heart of a believer by faith and love ; and if he withdraw himself, deny the usual tokens of his favour : It is an affliction so real, so heavy, that no earthly comfort can support under it,* Cant. v. ver. 6, 7. Let thy love, O my soul ! thus appear in longing desires, in vigorous sallies of affection after him.

4thly. In delighting, in triumphing in his presence, favour, and smiles : *We will be glad, and rejoice in thee ; we will remember thy love more than wine,* Cant. i. 4. And to the same purpose, v. 13, 14, 16. And again, Chap. ii. 4, 5. *He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love ; stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.* “ A description,” saith Dr. Patrick, “ of
“ one falling into a swoon, by the abundance of
“ her love ; in which case cordial spices are
“ wont to be called for to revive such persons,

“ and keep them from fainting quite away.
 “ Comfortable smells also are wont to be adm-
 “ nistered to the nose ; which is the meaning of
 “ calling her for fragrant apples, &c. By all
 “ which, the church is represented to be so
 “ marvellously affected with the love of Christ,
 “ as to be even oppressed under the weight of
 “ divine benefits, and at a perfect loss what to
 “ think of them ; having little or nothing to
 “ return for such infinite obligations.” There
 is an enjoyment of the blessed God, and of the
 Lord Jesus, even in this life, which affords a
 little heaven to holy souls, and is the earnest of
 the full joys above. The lovers of Christ under-
 stand this ; know what I mean. *I charge you,
 O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up
 nor awake my love, till he please,* Chap. iii. 5.
 Thus, O my soul ! express thy love to thy
 Redeemer ; reckon that *in his favour is life, and
 that his loving kindness is better than life.* *I found
 him whom my soul loved ; I held him, and would
 not let him go,* saith the spouse, *Cant.* iii. 4.
 Cleave to him ; do not willingly part with so
 great a treasure ; prefer it to thy chiefest joy :
 And if there be any little low souls that despise
 these things, as *Cant* and *Enthusiasm*, pity their
 ignorance and folly : But sure thou knowest
 better, than to be moved with a flat, insipid
 jest, pronounced from the chair of the scorner.
 There is a loyalty in the heart of Christ’s spouse,
 that makes his love her choicest cordial and
 refreshment. *He is come, he is come,* said a
 serious person with a sort of triumph, after
 some distance and estrangement. Love him,
 O my soul ! seek him with the rest of the
virgins ; and never think thou lovest him to

purpose, till thou findest his presence thy solace, thy life, thy heaven.

5thly. Show thy love by a zeal for his name and honour; a devotedness to his interest, and a constant readiness to serve him all the ways thou canst. *Lovest thou me*, saith Christ to *Peter*? And then adds, as a special evidence of his love, *feed my lambs, feed my sheep*, John xxi. 15, 16. Consider which way thou mayest advance his kingdom, and promote the great design he came into the world for: And let the zeal of love carry thee through any service, how expensive soever, that may be acceptable to him. Lord quicken me by thy grace; may I be able to say, *for me to live is Christ*: May all the lines of conversation center in him; may I think, contrive, project, speak, act, and live for him, and to him; making it my *meat and drink to do his will*; employing my time, talents, all my faculties and abilities; all I have and am for his honour. Grant, Lord, a more abundant effusion of thy spirit. Let me feel more the constraining power of thy love; enlarge my heart, and I will run the way of thy commandments.

6thly. Show thy love to him, by loving, relieving, succouring, and helping his members, according to thy capacities and opportunities. O! may I remember that comfortable, and yet monitory word: *Forasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, Matt. xxv. 40. There is a love of compassion and of beneficence due to the human species, as such. 'Ουκ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀλλ' ἀνθρώπινῳ, answered the philosopher, when one accused him of throwing away his bounty upon an undeserving person, *I did it not to the man, but to*

humanity : But those that bear his image should be especially dear to us ; *he that loved him that begets, loves him also that is begotten.* Lord, may those thou vouchsafest to call *brethren* be ever dear to me : Help me to love them for thy sake, and in loving them express my love to thee.

7thly. Show it by obedience to his commands. This he himself has proposed, as the great test of our love, *John xiv. 23. If a man love me, he will keep my sayings.* And *xv. 24. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words.* Had I the tongue of an angel, did I pretend to the devotion of a seraph, it would not prove me a lover of Christ, without subjection of heart to his authority, and a life governed by his precepts. O my soul ! herein be faithful ; get the law of thy Redeemer wrote on thy heart, and by an even, steady, cheerful, constant, universal obedience, manifest thy love.

8thly. Show thy love to him by longing to be with him. It is one description of the saints, that they *love his appearing*, *2 Tim. iv. 8.* Think with pleasure of that glorious day, when thy present espousals, and marriage-contract shall be consummated ; wait with patience, and yet with an earnest rejoicing hope, still crying out, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.

O my soul ! address thyself to this work ; thus to love, and thus to testify thy love. Christ has loved thee, and so loved, as no words can express, no actions of thine fully requite : Never, never forget his love. *Xenophon* mentions an *Armenian* Prince, who being taken captive, with his Queen, by *Cyrus* ; and being asked if he desired to have his liberty, his kingdom and Queen restored ; answered ; for my liberty and kingdom, I value them not ; but if

my blood would redeem my wife, I would cheerfully give it. Afterwards, *Cyrus* having restored him all, he asked his Queen what a one *Cyrus* was; the lady replied, I know not; my mind was so taken up with the man, that would give his life for my ransom, that I could think of no other. My Lord has actually done what is here said to be *offered only*, and exceedingly outdone it; has ransomed me with his blood, more precious blood; may I feel the like resentment; may he be fixed in my heart: And may my whole interest, power, life, and all be made a sacred *holocaust* to him, offered up on the altar of love.

On the Crucifixion of CHRIST.

‘Ο ἔμὸς ἔρως ἐσταύρωται, *my love was crucified*, A Sixth
saith the devout martyr *Ignatius*; he that loved ^{Speci-}
me as some understand him, and whose nature ^{men.}
is love; and did ever love break forth in a more
glorious flame! Turn aside, O my soul! and see
this great sight. *And when they were come to the
place which is called Calvary, there they crucified
him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand,
and the other on the left.* Luke xxiii. 33.
THEY CRUCIFIED HIM! Put him to death upon
a cross.

Let me consider a little the nature and quality of this death. And (1st,) I may observe, that this manner of Christ's death was not an accidental thing, owing to an hasty resolution of his enemies; but appointed of God, and frequently foretold: It was foretold and represented by types; as by the *brazen serpent*, Numb. xxi. 9. Which our Lord himself ex-

pounds to this sense, *John* iii. 14. *As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.* The paschal lamb also seems a type of the crucifixion of Christ. The law expressly ordered, that not a bone of the lamb should be broken, *Exod.* xii. 46. Which the *Evangelist* applies to this matter, *John* xix. 36. Signifying, that Christ should die a death, in which the breaking of the legs was usual. Some tell us (which makes the type and resemblance more lively) that the spit on which the paschal lamb was roasted, was contrived after the manner of a cross; insomuch that the spitted paschal appeared a sort of a crucifix. This is mentioned by *Justin Martyr*, and others: So that here we have an early representation of this great event: The lamb of God slain, and even crucified from the foundation of the world.

It was foretold by prophecy. *Zechariah* speaks of it in the plainest terms, *Chap.* xii. 10. *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced.* As doth *David*, *Psal.* xxii. 16. *They pierced my hands and my feet.* Which he speaks in the person of Christ, as is evident from *ver.* 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;* the very language of Christ upon the cross. Christ himself foretold it often, *Matt.* xx. 18, 19. *John* xii. 32, 33. *I, if I be lifted up, &c.* Which he said, signifying what manner of death he should die: So that when the *Gentiles*, and people of *Israel* conspired against Christ, they did no other than what *God's hand and counsel* had determined before to be done, *Acts* iv. 28. *Christ ought to suffer these things, and enter into his glory,* *Luke* xxiv. 26. To suffer, and to suffer these very things, and in this manner; to

die, and to die upon the cross: This was the voice of the law and the prophets. Behold here, O my soul! an accomplishment of ancient predictions; an evidence that Jesus is the Messiah; and let thy faith rest in him. This is he that was to come, nor needest thou look for another.

2dly. Crucifixion was a death exquisitely *painful*. Hence it is said, he *endured the cross*, Heb. xii. 2. The manner of it, in short, was this: His body was fastened to an erect, and his hands to a transverse beam, and both *hands and feet pierced with nails*; dug, as the *psalmist* expresses it, *Psal. xxii. 16*. And as these are the most nervous parts of the body, they must consequently be more sensible of pain: And in this posture he hung upon the cross for several hours; dying a languishing death, and feeling many deaths in one. Some have thought the curious frame, and fine contexture of Christ's body would make his sense of pain more quick and lively. It is certain, it was to *all* an exceeding painful death; and therefore the *Romans* borrow the word, by which they express torment in their language, from the cross; *cruciatu*s from *crux*.

3dly. It was a death *full of shame* and ignominy, and therefore proper to slaves, or strangers, guilty of the most enormous crimes. Hence *Cicero*, in his oration against *Verres*, mentions it as an high offence, that he had caused some *freemen* to be crucified. "It is a great fault," saith he, "to lay a freeman of *Rome* in bonds; worse to scourge him; and still worse to take away his life. *Quid dicam in crucem tollerere*; but what shall I say of crucifying him?" He intimates that this was so great an indignity

offered to a citizen, that words could not express, the vileness of him that would be the contriver and author of it: And yet this death did the Son of God submit to. The Lord of the world stoops to be *crucified*; undergoes the punishment and death of a poor slave, and is content to be numbered with the worst transgressors!

4thly. It was also a *cursed* death. *He that is hanged is accursed of God*, Deut. xxi. 23. All that suffered that death, and were hung upon a tree, were looked upon as great sinners, under the displeasure and curse of heaven; and accordingly were thus exposed to the view of the world; *were hung up between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either*; nor could they be buried, and have the common privilege of other dead, to be covered in the earth, till they had remained for a time a spectacle and warning to the living. *Christ* in being crucified was thus accursed, Gal. iii. 13. He was *made a curse for us*; herein a curse. Crucifying was like gibbetting, as practised among us, and used very much for the same ends and purposes; “as a
“signification of some heinous wickedness com-
“mitted, and a monument of public justice and
“vengeance against the offender.” And thus was the Son of God dealt with; he was hung up between two malefactors, *and made his grave with the wicked*, Isa. liii. 9. Never was so much innocence thus clouded! So much glory thus obscured before! *He endured the cross, despising the shame*, Heb. xii. 2.

5thly. There were some circumstances attending the crucifixion of *Christ*, that very much aggravated the suffering of it. *Barabbas*, an infamous transgressor, was preferred before him;

by which the people declared, as by a public voice and suffrage, that bad as *Barabbas* was, *Jesus* was worse. He was openly scourged, and delivered up to the rabble to be abused and insulted: who accordingly, in derision, put on him a scarlet robe, and for a crown, a wreath of thorns, with a reed in his hand for a sceptre: And when they had mocked his sovereignty, and with the utmost rudeness, made sport with him; they smite him on the face, and strike him on the head: And having this way sufficiently gratified their malice, they strip him of the royal robes given him in scorn; clothe him with his own garments, and so lead him away, with his cross on his shoulders, to be crucified: When he is placed between two malefactors, the better to leave an impression on the minds of the people, that he was an impostor, and at least equally guilty with them: And here (after he had borne the repeated insults of the multitude, *Matt.* xxviii. 39—45.) he expires; *My God, my God* (saith he), *why hast thou forsaken me*; and so gives up the ghost.

Lord! what shall I say to this! Thoughts are swallowed up; what a mystery, what a miracle of grace and love! View it, O my soul! come near, and contemplate with wonder and praise. Lord, teach me the proper lessons of this doctrine; help me to understand it aright; to apply and improve it aright.

A second Meditation on the same SUBJECT.

AND (1st.) how great an event is this, and with what reverence should I entertain the subject! The Son of God, whom all the angels of

God are commanded to worship, hung upon a cross, loaded with reproach and scorn, tortured and racked, bleeding and dying! Never was there such a spectacle as this offered to the eyes of mortals! It struck a sort of a terror into the whole creation, as we read in the history, *Matt. xxvii. 45. 51, 52, the sun hid its face; the veil of the temple was rent in twain; the earth quaked; the rocks were rent; the graves opened;* and even his enemies were seized with amazement, and made to relent. *Truly this, say they, was a righteous person, this was the Son of God, v. 54.* It would be a reproach to the wisdom of God, not to suppose there must be something of high importance aimed at in this providence. It is the part of wisdom to proportion the means to the end: There would not have been such a solemn *apparatus* and introduction to a trifle. Can we imagine the blessed God, righteous, wise, and holy in all his works, would have sent his Son into this world, have appointed him to a state of so much abasement: suffered him to have fallen into the hands of his enemies, exposed him to all this contempt and sorrow, but upon some great design? Every step towards this event was the ordination of heaven, the contrivance of infinite wisdom; and the thing itself the chief of the works of God; the Son of God on the cross! The sun could not behold the tragedy; the earth trembled under it; it was the amazement of angels, and terror of devils! View it, O my soul! with all reverence. The apostle determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified; and indeed the subject challengeth thy closest attention.

2dly. Of what infinite consequence is the salvation of the soul! What a value doth this put

upon it! And what a wretch must he be, that makes light of that which was thus purchased! *We have redemption and salvation through his blood.* This was in general the end Christ died for, viz. to deliver us from wrath to come, and restore us to the favour and enjoyment of God; for this he became a victim, a curse, and suffered the ignominy and pain of the cross. And shall I contemn what he thus valued, and neglect what cost him thus dear? May I never despise my own soul, despise that blood that purchased it: Surely salvation is too important a thing to be jested with. O! learn thy own dignity in the price of thy redemption. To save thee, *the Word was made flesh*, became a man, and died a sacrifice: For this he sweat in the garden, and bled on the cross. How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation?

3dly. What an abhorrence should this give me of sin! Retire, O my soul! to *Gethsemane*; go up to *Golgotha*; set thyself under the cross of Christ; think over the amazing tragedy in all its circumstances and particulars, and thence learn the nature of sin; read it in his agonies and sorrows, in his bloody sweat, in his *Lama sabachthani*: Never doth sin appear more exceeding sinful, more like itself, an hateful, accursed thing, than in the glass of Christ's sufferings! So detestable is it in the eyes of God, that he did not think it consistent with the honour of his government, to pardon it, without a sacrifice; and *this must be the blood of his own Son! He was delivered for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. *He was bruised for our iniquities*, Isa. liii. 5. Though he was taken and slain by wicked hands, our sins were the procuring cause. These were the nails, the thorns, the spear that pierced

* Dr. him. “ * The traitor, which by the hands of
Barrow. “ *Judas* delivered him up. We were the per-
“ sons, who, by our sins, did impeach him ;
“ the spiteful priests were but our advocates.
“ We, by them, did judge and sentence him ;
“ *Pilate* was but our spokesman. We, by them,
“ did inflict that horrid punishment on him ;
“ the *Roman* executioners were but our agents
“ herein. He became a curse for us, *i. e.* all
“ the derision, mockery, and contempt he en-
“ dured, did proceed from us : The silly people
“ were but tools, acting our parts ; our sins
“ were they that cried out, *Crucify him, crucify*
“ *him*, with clamours more loud, and more ef-
“ fectual, than did all the *Jewish* rabble. It
“ was they that by the hands of the fierce sol-
“ diers, and rude populacy, as by senseless en-
“ gines, did buffet and scourge him, did pierce
“ his flesh, and rend his sacred body : Upon
“ them therefore it is just and fit that we should
“ turn our hatred, and discharge our indigna-
“ tion.” It was sin that brought Christ from
the throne to the cradle, the manger and the
cross : It was against *that* the divine justice pro-
ceeded ; against *that* the divine displeasure was
kindled. O my soul ! let sin be thy aversion,
thy hatred and dread for ever : A common exe-
cution, in which public justice takes place,
strikes an awe into spectators, and begets a re-
verence of the law and of authority ; and is
designed to deter from the like transgression,
for which the like vengeance is due. And can
I behold the Son of God crucified, a most amaz-
ing instance of divine justice, and of his abhor-
rence of sin ! and not abhor it also ? Shall I
love that which God hates, and manifested his
hatred of, in so great a degree, as not to spare

his own Son, when he stood in the place of sinners? He must shed his blood, or no remission. Lord, help me to consider the wounds, the death, the cross of my Saviour, the strictness and severity of thy justice, and thence judge what sin is, and how to stand affected towards it.

4thly. How much peace and comfort may this afford the penitent believer! *Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died*, Rom. viii. 34. *The cross of Christ is the Christian's triumph*, Gal. vi. 14. *He hath made peace through the blood of his cross*, Col. i. 20. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, Ephes. i. 7. And canst thou, O my soul! question this redemption, this forgiveness, when it is the price of blood, and of such blood! Will he not pardon sin? Why then did he appoint and accept a sacrifice, such a sacrifice? O, dismiss thy fears and jealousies; turn unto God, and he will abundantly pardon. Christ's blood is a sovereign balm for a wounded spirit: It is a glorious means of atonement, a standing evidence of God's reconcileableness; a monument of his rich mercy and grace: a token of his goodness and love, and readiness to bless with all spiritual blessings in him. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. After this greater, this comprehensive foundation-blessing, I shall never question any lesser, lower blessing; especially when the former was a pledge of the latter, and designed to purchase and insure it. He that gave his Son, and delivered him up to be crucified for thee, will not deny any thing else that is good for thee.

5thly. What an argument this to an indifferency to the present world, to a contempt of its pomps and pleasures ! The Son of God passed through poverty, reproach, persecution, and at last expired upon the cross ! His employment was that of a *carpenter*, his estate the basket, and the charitable contributions of his mean followers ; his titles, wine-bibber, friend of publicans and sinners ; traitor, deceiver, demoniac, Beelzebub, &c. His sceptre a reed ; his crown thorns ; his life hunger ; thirst, weariness ; and his death crucifixion ! This was the state of things with the Son of God ; which affords us a full conviction of the truth of what he saith, *John xviii. 36. My kingdom is not of this world.* O my soul ! seekest thou great things for thyself ? Seek them not ; dream not of ease, honour, and happiness here below ; to affect them is incongruous for the disciples of a crucified Jesus : And, indeed, to fall into the *Jewish* fancy of their *Ben David*, a temporal, triumphant monarch. Christ, the head of the church, was abased and humbled ; his members must be, in this respect, in a great measure, conformed to him ; *suffer with him, that they may be glorified together*, *Rom. viii. 17.* O my soul ! look at the cross and be instructed. *Cogitemus cruent ejus et divitias lutum putabimus*, saith the Father : Let us meditate on the cross of Christ, and we shall trample the riches and glories of this world as dirt under our feet. “ If with the eyes of
 “ our minds,” saith one, “ we do behold our
 “ Lord, hanging naked upon a gibbet, be-
 “ smeared with his own blood, groaning under
 “ extreme anguish of pain, encompassed with
 “ all sorts of disgraceful abuses ; will not the
 “ imagination of such a sight dim the lustre of

“ all earthly grandeurs and beauties, damp the
“ sense of all carnal delights and satisfactions ?”
&c. Lord, may I be a true disciple of the cross ;
dead to the flatteries and vanities of this world.
Grant me the humility and mortification thy
cross preaches. May I learn of thee, who wast
meek and lowly ; glory in thy cross, and thereby
become crucified to the world, and the world
to me !

6thly. How powerful a motive doth this afford
to gratitude and obedience ! This is an instance
of love full of wonder. O ! may it have equal
constraint : What service should I grudge for
my dearest Lord, who thought not a crucifixion
too costly an evidence of his love to me ! O my
soul ! look to a bleeding, dying Saviour ; place
thyself under his cross ; view him in all his cir-
cumstances of ignominy and sorrow ; remember
this he suffered on thy account, and thence infer
thy obligations to him. Let this instance of his
obedience be the example and motive of thine :
Love him, live to him, who has thus loved and
died for thee, so that henceforth that may be
thy motto, *Christus crucifixus cordifixus ; My
Love was crucified.*

And thus I have offered some specimens of
the more perfect, complete method of medita-
tion ; not that I expect that every one, or in-
deed any one, in the stated course of their clo-
set devotions, should imitate these patterns :
But as the subjects I have chosen are of the
greatest importance, I thought it might not be
unacceptable to some readers, to find them en-
larged upon, though it be more than was neces-
sary to my particular design, which was to give
examples of meditation, as to method and order
especially. What I expect from the more intel-

ligent Christians, and recommend to them, if they attempt any thing this way, is that they proceed in some such method. First explain their subject, then prove, illustrate, and so go on to admonish and expostulate with themselves; form resolutions, soliloquies, colloquies, &c. as the matter may require; which may be done in more or fewer essays at different times; and with greater or less exactness, according to their different abilities, furniture, leisure, and frame of their minds. And if, after all, these specimens be thought less fit for imitation, I would willingly hope the matter of them will not be without instruction to the generality of Christians, on which account they will more readily excuse them.

SECT. IX.

I now proceed to some Specimens or Examples of Meditation in a looser Method, which the more judicious Christians may be able in some measure to imitate, at least in their better Hours, and most devotional Frames; I mean as to the Method and Order, how much soever they fall short as to the Style and Thought.

Of GRACE.

1 Cor. xv. 10. *By the Grace of God, I am what I am.*

*First
Specimen*

SOME have been pleased to observe that nothing is more talked of by Christians, especially since the days of St. *Austin*, than grace, and yet

that nothing is less understood. The *Jesuit*, no question, thought himself witty, that said, Grace was *nescio quid*, an unintelligible imaginary thing, a supposed something, but nobody knows what. Nor are they content to reduce it to a mere name, a sound without meaning; but the very name is become contemptible with many, treated with a sort of ridicule as a term of cant, only fit for *enthusiasts*, or at best dull old fashioned divines.

Others retain the word, have it frequently in their mouth, but grossly abuse it; debasing the idea of it, and turning it into a jest. Grace with them only stands for good husbandry, frugal management in following the affairs of this world: If it please God, say they, speaking of their children, to give them grace; when they manifestly intend no more than a sort of secular wisdom or sagacity, care to improve their patrimony, to get or save an estate. This is grace with them, all they seem to desire or have any notion of. Shameful prostitution! O my soul enter not thou into their secret! Surely grace is too divine, too sacred a thing to be thus trifled with: And indeed when I find it standing in my Bible with such high characters; find such great things every where ascribed to it, the interests and comforts of the church so much carried on and served by it, I cannot but look upon it as *venerable* and accordingly would entertain it: Help me O my God better to understand this divine and glorious subject; afford me some rays of the light; the present assistance of thy grace, that I may celebrate and praise it in a due manner, and set forth the wonders thereof.

Grace is a term of different acceptation in scripture, particularly in the New Testament, where it more frequently occurs. It often signifies the *favour and good will of God*. *Thou hast found favour, or grace with God*, Luke i. 30. *Jesus increased in favour, or grace, with God and man*, Luke ii. 52. *The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant*, 1 Tim. i. 14. and thus we are said to be *called by his grace*, Gal. i. 15. to be *justified by his grace*, Rom. iii. 24. to have *redemption through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of his grace*, Eph. i. 7. to be *saved by his grace*, Eph. ii. 8. Grace is the divine benevolence with the effects and fruits of it; the goodness of God issuing forth towards his creatures: As it respects the indigent and necessitous, it may be called bounty; as it respects the guilty and miserable, it is mercy; as it respects the unworthy, it is grace. In a word grace is the divine love under the notion of acting freely.

Grace sometimes signifies the gospel; as Rom. vi. 14. *ye are not under the law but under grace*, that is, under the gospel: And the same sense it has 2 Cor. vi. 1. Tit. ii. 12.

It sometimes signifies the divine power exerted in the hearts of men; the influences and operations of God's spirit enlightening, quickening, renewing, changing, &c. And this may be considered either in the first special instance, as at conversion; or as displayed in the after conduct and supply of the soul. The former is called by some divines *Gratia operans*, grace working *in us*; the latter *Gratia cooperans*, grace working *with us*, the terms being borrowed from the schools. The scripture affords instances

of both : Of the former, Gal. i. 15—*called me by his grace*, Acts xviii. 27.—*helped them much who had believed through grace* : Of the latter, 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. If any object against the interpretation of these texts, the thing itself pleaded for is frequently asserted in other scriptures. *It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. *The God of peace make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 21. *The Lord opened Lydia's heart*, Acts xvi. 14. *We are said to be his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. *to be willing in the day of his power*, Psal. cx. 3. The day of power is the day of God's grace; when he puts forth *the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe*, Eph. i. 19. This is one notion of grace; it signifies the divine concurrence and assistance; the divine agency and influence upon the hearts of men, by which they are quickened, enlightened, transformed, and afterwards established, conducted, furnished for all the duties of their course and warfare. *God strengthens us by his spirit with might in the inward man*, Eph. iii. 16.

Grace sometimes signifies a divine quality or temper produced in us; the effect of God's powerful operation : As when we are bid to *grow in grace*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. *to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. And thus grace is the same with *the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. The several *fruits of the Spirit* mentioned, Gal. v. 22. 23. as *love, joy, peace,*

long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, are graces; so many distinct and particular graces; divine habits of the mind, which the Holy Spirit implants and worketh in us. I do not think it worth while to dispute whether it be most proper to call them *moral virtues or graces*: As they are the fruit of the Spirit, have him for their author, they are divine in their rise, nature, and tendency, and saving in their issue, are perfectly the same thing, whatever name we give them: Lord grant me these excellencies, all of them, and all in fuller measures; and I shall think myself happy; nor will it make any difference in my estimation or enjoyment, whether we call them graces or virtues.

This is the scripture account of grace. I am sensible some make it a question whether there be sufficient reason for all this distinction; and are ready to determine that grace means nothing else in scripture, but the favour and kindness of God: It may be the matter might be accommodated with them by a concession not injurious to truth; that this is the strict and proper notion of grace, and what runs through, and may be preserved in all the instances that have been mentioned. Thus the gospel is called grace, as it is an eminent discovery of the favour and good-will of God towards sinners. The divine energy and operation upon the heart is grace, on the same account, as it flows from the divine favour and goodness, was excited and influenced thereby, both in the beginning and process of the work. The several particular virtues that adorn the mind of the believer; all these are grace, expressions of divine favour and goodness: So that though grace is applied

to different things in scripture, there is no need to depart from the primary notion of it. The gospel is grace; the operation of the Spirit on the hearts of men, and the effects thereof in inward regeneration, and in all the parts of the new creature are grace; each of them, all of them may be termed grace; as in them all the love and kindness of God our Saviour appears.

And O my God! how much am I a debtor to thy grace; help me to recount my obligations; often to renew the history of it, with that humble, admiring, adoring thankfulness that becomes me: *By the grace of God I am what I am.* I had been nothing, worse than nothing, without thy grace; a carnal, secure, stupid creature; sinful, sensual, every way vile; a lost undone creature, with the heart of a brute here, and of a devil hereafter! Pause, O my soul! And look back a little on the wonders of divine grace, the surprising story of it with all dutiful and loyal ascriptions, still saying, O that I could say it with suitable devotion, *by the grace of God I am what I am.*

It is by the grace of God that I am a Christian, that I enjoy the light and teaching, and the many advantages of the gospel dispensation; that the sun of righteousness has arose upon me with healing in his wings; while so many sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death: Lord this is an act of thy favour and kindness, a distinction of thy providence; may I not receive thy grace here in vain!

It is by the grace of God that I am a convert, transformed by the renewing of my mind; have been brought to engage, heartily to engage in the service, and made to taste the comforts of the gospel; have been inclined to take Christ's

easy and honourable yoke upon me; and that whilst others stand in the market place all the day idle; only play and trifle with a dull form of religion; are not initiated by any internal teaching and divine unction: Which alas! is the case of great numbers, that have had the same external means and helps with myself; the same Bible and ministry; and of some it may be that have had the same parents and education: And who has made me to differ? Thy grace, O my God! Not my will or wisdom, but thy conduct; not my merit, but thy mercy, Thou hast turned me from darkness to light, opened my heart, directed my choice; for this I owe thee the highest praises, in heaven I shall praise thee. *By the grace of God I am what I am.*

It is by the grace of God that I have any of the ornaments of a real saint, a true believer. O that herein I may not be mistaken! that I am distinguished by any of the fruits of the blessed Spirit. Lord thy power, thy grace has planted these in my soul. My faith is of thy operation. Thou hast begotten me again to a lively hope. Thou hast shed abroad thy love in my heart, through the Holy Ghost, which thou hast given me: Once I was a servant of divers lusts and pleasures defiled and polluted; thou hast washed and cleansed me, hast made me *all glorious within*, and granted me the *clothing of wrought gold*. I own thy hand and adore thy grace herein.

It is by the grace of God that I have been supported under all my burdens and conflicts, preserved in all my temptations, dangers and fears: How many, how great the salvations God has wrought out for me through my course

and life? I remember at such a time a concurrence of exercises and troubles exceedingly threatened me. *I said my foot slippeth, and then thy mercy held me up.* I was pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that I despaired of any comfortable issue, 2 Cor. i. 8. But thou Lord hast delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I remember the perplexed thoughts, the gloomy prospects I had; *without were fightings, within were fears*: But God, who comforteth those who are cast down, comforted me. I remember the means, the manner and circumstances of this great deliverance; to thy name, O Lord, be the praise——At such a time I was in the midst of snares and temptations, and was preserved by a wonder of providence and grace, without seeing my danger till it was over. God has often saved me by opening my eyes that I might discern the snares spread for me: This may not be intelligible to every Christian, but some I doubt not know how to fill up the vacancy. And I mention it as a hint that we should record the more remarkable instances of divine grace and providence towards us in our deliverances, and frequently have recourse to them for enlivening our devotion. In this instance he has saved me by shutting them, that I might not be taken by the bait prepared: O! may I never forget the wisdom and sovereignty of grace herein, nor overlook the divine invisible hand, that was my defence and rescue!

It is by the grace of God that I have been assisted in, and carried through all my work and duty as a *Christian*: This has supplied me for the several services of my warfare. I cannot say I have laboured *abundantly*, much less *more*

abundantly than others ; but if I have laboured at all for God, and for the interest of my own soul ; done any thing with success in religion, I have the greatest reason to say, *not I but the grace of God that was with me.*

It is by the grace of God that I have been conducted and led hitherto. This directed me to and in religion ; to the profession I have engaged in, and in many circumstances thereof. This has directed me in particular difficulties and straits : Often have I been at a loss concerning my duty ; and upon serious application to God he has disentangled my thoughts ; taken me by the hand and pointed out to me the way that I should choose. I have had so much experience of his special light and guidance, in several remarkable instances of this nature, that I can never question it, and desire never to forget it. Lord, I resign all to thy conduct ; leave all my affairs and concerns with thee for the future : Guide me by thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory.

It is by the grace of God that I have persevered, held on my way (O that I could say with more evidence I have waxed stronger and stronger !) that I have stood my ground in the Christian profession, not made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience : How much in danger at such a time ? And at such a time ! when——But having obtained help of the Lord I continue unto this day. I adore thy grace herein, O my God ; may I believe to the saving of my soul.

It is by the grace and favour of God that I enjoy the many privileges, dignities and blessings of the Christian state and covenant ; that I am pardoned, justified, adopted ; have the teaching,

discipline and comforts of God's family; the refreshments and delights of his house; the protection and ministry of his angels; the promise and prospect of a future heaven. Lord help me to celebrate thy grace; it has been my salvation, it shall be my song for ever.

Of GRACE.

GAL. i. 15. *called me by his Grace.*

I CANNOT but think the distinction, common in books of divinity, pertinent and grounded upon scripture, of an *external* and *internal* call: Our Saviour seems to hint at it Matt. xx. 16. *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Many have the external that want the internal call. Hence whole churches and communities of Christians are represented in scripture, *as called*; particularly the *Romans*, Chap. i. 6, 7. It is not improbable but most of them had the internal saving call, (effectual grace more ordinarily attending the dispensation of the gospel at that time) but some no question had only the outward call. *Second Specimen.*

According to this distinction, the church of Christ receives a different denomination, of *visible* and *invisible*: All that are professed members of the church; who are entered into it by baptism, and own the institutions and laws of the gospel, make the *visible church*: Such as are sincere in their profession, who not only confess with the mouth, but believe with the heart, are the *invisible church*. The one are the *tares*, the other the *wheat*. The one the foolish,

the other the wise virgins ; as in the gospel parables. Both make a profession ; both carry their lamps and go forth to meet the bridegroom ; but the one have oil, lasting oil, in their vessels with their lamps, which the other have not. *God has called them by his grace ;* and these are termed the *invisible church* : because their faith, hope, love, fear, all the glorious ornaments of their minds, the great principles of their obedience, are *invisible*, and out of sight. Their profession is open and seen, as well as that of others ; but their inward principles, by which they are distinguished, lie concealed. *The world knows us not*, 1 John iii. 1. The Lord knows, and he only, who are his.

It is indeed no small privilege to be a member of the visible church ; to have a station in God's church, though it be only in the *outer courts*, and as a candidate for religion : And among other mercies of my life I would be thankful for this ; that I was born in a Christian country, early instructed in the doctrines, principles and duties of the Christian religion, and by sacred baptism entered among the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus ; that I have had the admonition, discipline, teaching, and example of Christian parents ; that I have sat at the posts of wisdom's gates ; have enjoyed the holy Bible, and the several advantages of God's house and ordinances. I bless thee, O my God ! for this distinction of thy favour ; *for the call of thy providence* into thy church.

But I would not rest here : This call, if I attain no further, will leave me short of heaven. Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23. Matt. xxv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. x. 1—6. It is the *internal call*, that distinguishes the true Christian from the hypocrite, the mem-

bers of the *invisible* church, from common professors, or the mere members of the *visible* church. Lord, grant me this distinction, touch my heart by thy Spirit, and enthrone thyself there.

This call the scripture represents in different terms and under different notions ; as by being born again by repentance, conversion, a new heart, being transformed by the renewing of the mind, the circumcision of the heart, partaking of the divine nature, &c. The same thing is intended in all this variety of expression. When God calls any by his grace there is a universal change made in the temper and frame of the mind ; in the judgment, will, affections, and a new state introduced in the soul. And it is of this call the *apostle* speaks in his own case, *Gal. i. 15.* *God called me by his grace ;* not only by his favour, but by his powerful operation, as appears from the history of that matter, *Acts ix.* And surely never was there a more illustrious display of sovereign powerful grace ! In the midst of his rage and fury, he is laid prostrate in an instant, brought to the foot of Christ with the lowest submission, saying, *Lord what wilt thou have me do ?* One word from heaven disarms him of all his enmity, turns a Pharisee into a Christian, a persecutor into a preacher ! It is granted there was something extraordinary in the manner and circumstances of this conversion ; yet every Christian experiences the same grace in kind ; has the same effectual powerful call : *We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 10.* *Of his oven will begat he us by the word of truth, Jam. i. 18.* *Lydia's heart was opened as well as that of the*

apostle *Paul*, Acts xvi. 14. And the like may be affirmed of every believer, every genuine member of the Christian church, it has pleased God to call him by his grace.

How God operates on the mind and will, is a question not easy to be resolved : But we must not deny every thing, the manner of which we do not understand. We do not know how body and soul, matter and spirit are in vital union, so that they have a mutual influence upon one another ; the spirit working by the body, and using its organs at pleasure, commanding by a thought and act of the will the several members thereof. This is fact, and what no man will dispute, and yet what no wise man will undertake to explain: We are satisfied so it is, but how it is we know not ; and indeed should be ready to deny it *could be*, but that we are sure it is: What wonder then if we are puzzled, and are forced to own mystery in things of an higher and more exalted nature, in the manner of one spirit's acting upon another ? *The wind bloweth where it listeth, saith our Saviour, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, and so is every one that is born of the Spirit*, John iii. 8. The working of God's Spirit is secret and mysterious, not so discernible in itself as in its effects : What have I done, says *Elijah* to *Elisha*, when he *cast his mantle upon him*, and he was thereupon immediately determined to follow the prophet, 1 *Kings* xix. 19, 20. What God does to us when he calls us by his grace ; how he touches the heart, and bows the will, and gives an effectual turn to the soul, is above us fully to explain. The work itself is certain, experienced and known by

good men, manifest by the happy consequences of it, however abstruse and mysterious as to the manner.

We may conclude in general that God works upon us in a way suitable to our faculties. The will cannot be forced, that is a contradiction; nor must we suppose that it is determined by mere physical power, without argument or conviction: What if one conceive of the matter thus: *When God is by his grace reclaiming a sinner, and setting up his throne in the heart, he begins, as in the first creation, with a fiat lux, let there be light, shines in upon the understanding; removes prejudices, represents the concerns of religion in their reality, importance and necessity, holds them before the eyes of the mind, awakens and fixes the attention to them, and so by the force of light attracts and subdues the heart:* This, or something of this nature, I reckon, is what we intend by grace, so far at least as I can explain it; not denying in the mean time any more direct and immediate influences upon the will. It is certain the obstinacy and enmity of that must be overcome; whether this is done by the power of divine light *only*, now filling the mind, or by more immediate influences upon that faculty itself, I cannot determine, and shall not debate.

The means God makes use of in this work, and his manner of proceeding therein, are various and different; sometimes the word read or heard; sometimes a special providence; a sharp affliction; or eminent deliverance; one or other, it may be all of these successively, are the monitors; hereby the sinner is made to pause, stand still, and consider; and often the mind is so far impressed, that like *Nebuchad-*

nessar in his *dreams*, his *sleep breaketh from him*, Dan. ii. 1. And now conscience being roused, and at leisure, the noise and importunity of present things suspended, and for a while silenced, the Spirit of God does his office ; reads grave and serious lectures, lays open former delusions, represents the danger and folly of a sinful course with suitable life ; points out the way of future duty and safety ; whereupon it may be there is an immediate resignation and compliance : The awakened sinner becomes prostrate, and cries out, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ;* being disposed at this time, under such discipline and divine influence, to sign a blank ; do every thing, any thing God shall appoint.

Sometimes the work is done *more gradually*, and by way of treaty. The soul is summoned to surrender, beats a parley ; appears willing to hearken to overtures of peace ; makes some good essays in religion ; retireth, prayeth, &c. but the good mood goes off ; the devil gains advantage, and all issues in nothing except some faint purposes and promises for the future ; a common delusion, by which awakened sinners shake off their present convictions : Afterwards, by the same, or it may be different means, the conviction is revived, and the treaty renewed ; and yet too often without success : The unhappy creature hearkens to his enemies, and like *Pharaoh* hardens his heart and returns to folly. And thus the matter may remain a considerable while before the victory is won, the sinner subdued, and God takes possession of the soul by his grace. Sometimes the work is accomplished *in a gentle mild way* ; and sometimes with *more terror and bondage* ; with a long apparatus of

convictions, and amazing visions and apprehensions of wrath. We have instances of all this variety in scripture; as in the call of some of Christ's first disciples, of the apostle *Paul*, the jailor, *Zaccheus*, *Lydia*, the prodigal in the parable, &c. which I reckon may be looked upon as specimens, examples, and a sort of types of future conversions. But however the work is done, it is certain God is the author of it. He *calls by his grace*: It receives its rise, progress, and perfection from a divine hand: He be-
ginneth a *good work* in us, and performeth it unto the *day of Christ Jesus*, Phil. i. 6.

O my soul! look to him as the author and finisher of thy faith, in this as well as in other respects; review thy own experiences in this matter; enquire into the evidences and testimonies of thy change. Has God called thee by his grace? Added the internal to the external call? If so, fall before him with humble adoration: It is so important, so necessary and glorious a work, that thou canst never be enough thankful for it: It is the beginning of a new, a divine life; the pledge and earnest of eternal life. The apostle uses it as an argument with *Philemon* to admit his intercession in behalf of *Onesimus*, that *he owed him even his own self*, *Philemon*, ver. 19. It seems he had been the instrument of his conversion and call, and he signifies this was of such consequence, that it gave the very instrument a sort of title to him; intimating moreover that before his conversion he was *lost and worthless*; was not himself, had not himself; and that it was divine grace that restored him to himself: So in the parable, Luke xv. 24. *This my son was dead and is alive, was lost and is found*: Hast thou O my God! called me by

thy grace; on this account, as well as others, *I owe thee even my own self*: I was dead; thou hast made me alive; I was lost, thy grace has found me; reclaimed and recovered me, restored me to the proper use and employment of my faculties; brought me to live the life of a reasonable creature; fitted me to move in the sphere in which thou hast set me, and answer the end for which thou hast made me: How depraved, degenerate and ill was I? All disorder, confusion and tumult within; reason deposed, sense and appetite advanced to its throne; foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, reprobate to every good work; but God called me by his grace. Lord, I adore the grace that has saved me. It is by thy grace *I am what I am. I owe thee myself*: Help me to devote myself to thee; that as thou hast given me the possession and enjoyment of myself, all I have and am may henceforth be sacred unto thee, be thine entirely and for ever.

Of GRACE.

1 TIM. i. 14. *And the Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.*

Third Specimen. EVERY Christian is so much indebted to the grace of God, that methinks he should take a particular pleasure in celebrating and praising it. The curious have their emblems and devices, with proper mottos, by which they design instruction, and admonition suitable to the subject they would adorn, and often therein they point at their own tempers, state, and circumstances, and intend a testimony of gratitude.

No motto certainly better fits the Christian, than that the *apostle* furnishes him with, and seems to have chosen for himself, 1 Cor. xv. 10. *By the grace of God I am what I am.* Lord it is by thy grace that I am *any* thing, can do *any* thing that is good, and enjoy any thing that is good, and enjoy any thing that is comfortable. From this I have derived my past blessings, on this depend my future hopes. Had I the faculties of a *seraph*, the tongue of men and angels, all would be too little to set forth the riches and *exceeding abundance* of thy grace; it has followed me all my days, filled my whole life, every scene and state of it; pardoning, supporting, delivering, conducting, and saving me. *I would bless thee O God my king, and praise thy name for ever and ever.* But among all the kind and endearing expressions of it, the first special instance in my conversion or call, is worthy of the greatest acceptation, and demands my most thankful acknowledgments; herein the grace of my Lord was *exceeding abundant*: Help me to contemplate it often, to look back upon it, for the quickening of my love, gratitude and obedience.

I have the great *apostle* for my monitor and example here. He was a constant advocate for grace in all his writings; but seems to single out this instance, as a subject to exercise his warmest affections. Accordingly he returns to it on all occasions, and goes through the history of it with much devotion, *Acts* xxii. *Acts* xxvi. And to the same purpose, 1 Cor. xv. 8, 9, 10. *Last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time; for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God; but by the grace of God I am what I am, &c.* And again,

1 Tim. i. 13, 14, 16. *Who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant. For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* How was his heart filled with the subject? It seems too big for his expression. *I obtained mercy. The grace of God was exceeding abundant. And for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first he might shew forth all long-suffering.* He seems to think himself the first greatest instance of grace, and a sort of a pattern and specimen, according to which God would proceed with other *chiefest* of sinners. And am not I another example of the like grace, *exceeding abundant grace.* In me, secondly, *God has shewn forth all long-suffering.* Bless the Lord, O my soul! though thou canst not rise up to the notes of this great and good man, join in his song, however, in the best manner thou canst. *Unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.*

The apostle might have something peculiar in the circumstances in which the grace of God found him, and in the manner of his call; if my case be not exactly parallel to his, I am sure it is such as requires the utmost gratitude from me, and very much illustrates the grace of God. I was before, if not a blasphemer, a persecutor, yet many ways *injurious*, to God, my neighbour, and myself; polluted, vile, a sinner before the Lord exceedingly; I cannot reflect upon my past course, but I am ready to stand amazed at my own guilt, and at the grace that saved me. I

was born of parents professing the Christian religion, and who were, in some good measure, exemplary therein ; had from them much good instruction, many seasonable admonitions ; was brought up under the constant preaching of the gospel, heard many a useful, serious sermon ; particularly from Mr. —, but all in vain, and to no purpose. I was often told of my duty, put upon prayer, reprov'd for my faults, but without effect. I still hardened my neck, and continued in folly. It is my unhappiness and loss, that I have so imperfect a memory of this dark, uncomfortable scene of life. I am sorry I did not sooner, and more particularly record it. This I certainly know of it, that it was wholly made up of vanity, folly, and sin ; I lived without God in the world, casting off fear, and restraining prayer. I remember particularly that I made no conscience of the horrid sin of lying ; but was always ready to invent a lie to disguise a fault. I was often guilty of the heinous sin of — I remember, so little reverence had I for religion, notwithstanding my education, that I sometimes laugh'd at a good man, Mr. —, for his serious prayers and discourse, and call'd it *whining*. How justly might such a profane mouth have been stopp'd in the dust ; such a wicked mind immediately plung'd into hell ! I remember the extreme danger I was in at such a time, when I was a companion of fools, and my inclination led me to join myself to *certain lewd fellows of the baser sort*. I remember I was visit'd with a sickness, in which all my friends despaired of my life. This I was put in mind of afterwards, and of the mercy of God in my deliverance ; but was so far from being affected with it, that I ridicul'd the kind and faithful

monitor. This, *and much worse*, belongs to the story of my past life : And yet *I obtained mercy* ; it pleased God to stop me in my course of ignorance and enmity ; to open my eyes, touch my heart, and *call me by his grace* : Shall I not say, have I not the utmost reason to say, *the grace of the Lord Jesus was exceeding abundant ! That in me he hath shewn forth all long-suffering* : I had been in hell, Lord ; had not thy mercy prevented, and *plucked me as a firebrand out of the burning*. How to estimate my deliverance and thy grace therein, I know not, much less to express my gratitude in suitable strains. May thy grace perfect what it has begun, bring me to heaven ; then I shall praise thee, and thither I refer the work.

Of GRACE.

ACTS xxvi. 19. *I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*

Fourth Specimen. THE call of this great apostle, which he here relates at large before Agrippa, and elsewhere acknowledges with so much devotion ; as 1 Tim. i. 13, &c. had in it something extraordinary. As he was upon his journey to Damascus, with a commission in his hand for persecuting the church of Christ, he was struck down to the ground by a light from heaven ; from whence he heard an awful voice, that of the Lord Jesus, whose servants and followers he was treating with so much violence. The voice attained the end for which it was sent ; was accompanied with so much power and authority, that it commanded his attention, and reached his con-

science. Nor does he resist the divine arm, now revealed; *he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*; but yields himself a willing captive. Lord! says he, *what wilt thou have me to do*, Acts ix. 6. How sovereign and victorious the grace of God! Lord, thou that madest the heart, has an immediate access to it; canst open and subdue it with a word. When thou wilt work, who shall lett? Thy council shall stand, and thou wilt do all thy pleasure.

Nor was this a transient conviction and fit of terror, but an effectual divine call, accomplished with an high hand, and attended with such a surprising change in the *apostle*, in the temper of his mind and course of his life; followed with such discoveries of God to him, that it brought its own evidence along with it. Accordingly, we find he afterwards refers to it on all occasions, as a thing out of question. *I obtained mercy. He called me by his grace.* He often relates the circumstances of it, as a known history and fact, of which he had as much certainty, as of any other incident of his life, Acts xxii. 4. —17. And in the 26th chapter he goes over the story again, in all its circumstances, concluding, v. 19. *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.* He kept the whole scene in view, remembers, with no little resentment, his former, blind, wicked zeal in persecuting the church of God, and the kind surprise of divine grace towards him, and what intercourse he had with God thereupon. It is not improbable, that while he was at *Damascus* three days, without sight, he had the gospel made known to him. Now it was that *it pleased God to reveal his Son in him*, as he takes notice, Gal. i. 16. instruct and furnish him for that glorious ministry, he after-

wards so well fulfilled. He tells the *Galatians*, that the gospel he preached, was not after man; that he neither received it of man, nor was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, Galat. i. 11, 12. referring, it may be, to this very time, when he was a happy captive at *Damascus*; lying under the hand of God, and receiving his illumination. Blessed school! infinitely preferable to that of *Gamaliel*: The eyes of his body were closed, but those of the mind opened. And here began the happy period of his Christian life; that course of eminent services which he prosecuted, with a zeal and industry becoming such a chosen vessel.

The methods of divine grace are exceeding different towards different persons. All good men have not a conversion and call, as remarkable as that of the *apostle*. Some are brought under the government of grace, and engaged in religion *gradually* and insensibly; which is the case of many who have been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; have known the holy scriptures from a child; have been disciplined in the houses of faithful *Abraham's*; and have been followed with daily admonitions and charges to keep the way of the Lord. The religion of such persons grows up with them: They have been restrained from gross enormities, and preserved in some good *decorum* and order: Something was done in the work of grace at one time, by means of the instruction of parents, or the public ministry, and something at another; but when and how the work was accomplished, and Christ formed in them, is hard to say: They themselves frequently cannot give an account of it. But with respect to sinners of greater scandal and

infamy; who have lived long in a course of wilful, open disobedience; in the total neglect and contempt of religion, the change is more evident and obvious; when the grace of God finds them in such a state, the call of God manifests itself, and ordinarily will be known and observed. And I cannot but reckon this circumstance to have some advantage in it; not only as it gives a stronger spring, and more vigour to the Christian's motion afterwards, in the divine life, and adds oil to the flame of his zeal, as it did to the *apostle*; but as it affords a satisfactory proof of the work itself, and frees the mind from those suspicions and jealousies, which are sometimes the exercise of young converts, and of such as were wrought upon in a more obscure, leisurely way.

Bless the Lord, O my soul! for his grace, and for this additional circumstance of it; that thou hast not only some good evidence of thy call, but hast the history of that glorious, and solemn affair before thee, for thy frequent perusal. *God be thanked that I was (though I was) the servant of sin; I have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered me.* God called me by his grace; and though it was not by an audible voice from heaven, yet it was in so signal a manner, and with such circumstances of conviction, illumination, &c. as would not allow me to question the thing. The first part of my life for eighteen (some may say twenty, thirty, &c.) years together was wasted, and lost in vanity and folly. I wandered, with the prodigal, from my father's house, casting off his government, despising his protection, care, and blessing. And wretch, as I was, would fain have filled myself with *husks*, the

swine's food, sensual pleasures. *I was lost and dead*, Luke xv. 32. lost and dead to all the purposes of life; the life either of a man, or a Christian. I had no serious thoughts of God, my soul and eternity. I cannot say, that for the space of ——— years, I ever once in earnest put up one petition to God. I eat and drank, lay down and rose up, day after day, and night after night, without any acknowledgment of my preserver and benefactor; indeed God was not in all my thoughts. I attended public worship among other people; but with no more reverence of God, or regard of what I was about, than if I had been a statue or a brute. I slept under sermons; slept many of them away; and might as well have been always asleep, for any advantage I had, or proposed to myself by them. My attention was always loose and unfixed, and often carried away to other objects; and my mind filled with the sorriest impertinences. I never bore any part in public prayer; nor knew what it was to join therein: Sometimes I gazed at the minister, and heard him pray in the same broken, dull manner I heard him preach; but never concurred, by forming in my heart the requests and acknowledgments he offered up to God. And O! how loose, vain, and in many instances downright wicked, was my life and course? In short, I had no sense or relish of religion, or any of the things of it; but was a mere mass of stupidity, folly and sin.

And thus I continued till I was ——— years of age; when one day hearing Mr. ——— preach from ——— my mind was strangely awakened: Methinks I see the preacher still, and hear his voice; and I well remember some of his words,

and believe I shall never forget them as long as I live. I went home, fell upon my knees, prayed as well as I could, and wept in abundance—After this I passed through much variety; had many conflicts in my own mind; sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, and almost despairing. I retired from company; prayed often in my manner; having but dark and confused notions of religion, notwithstanding my education, I found myself very much at a loss, and was assaulted with many, and dangerous temptations. At last I applied myself to Mr. — who answered my scruples; directed and encouraged me in my duty; lent me some good books; prayed with me, and made me an offer of future assistance: And I had frequent conversation with him afterwards, which was of no small use to me. Still many difficulties I found in my way, and many infirmities accompanied all I did: But I have reason to think this was the day of God's grace and power to my soul; this the *time of life*. The scales now fell off from my eyes. I saw clearly the folly, danger, and madness of my former course. The things of religion had that weight and authority with me as never before. I was afraid of offending God, even to scrupulosity, in some instances; was watchful over my thoughts, words and actions. I durst not let a day pass without prayer; nor could I be easy, unless I found my heart engaged and affected therein; and had some intercourse with God; and often I prayed several times a day. Sermons and good books had quite another savour with me than they used to have. The world appeared to me all vanity and emptiness. I looked upon the things of it; the scenes of pleasure,

mirth and business, which were before my great entertainment, with shyness, indifferency, and indeed with contempt. I remember sometimes when I awaked in the morning, my mind was filled with awful apprehensions of eternity; and as I was ready to pity the men of the world, who have their hearts so much immersed in it, so it was with a sort of a regret, that I was obliged to bear any part among them *: And thus, through the rich grace of God, I proceeded in my course of religion comfortably; though not without impediments, clouds, temp-

* I have before hinted the cases of Christians, and methods of God's grace towards them in their conversion and call, are exceeding various; often afflictions of one kind or other; a near prospect of death, in a sharp distemper; disappointments in the world, &c. are the means of awakening careless sinners, and bringing them to their senses. Sometimes a sermon heard, a good book read, a text of scripture set home with power on the heart, or an occasional admonition and reproof. Any of these, all these God can, and frequently does bless and make effectual by his grace, for the conversion of souls. But whatever be the means or manner of God's call, I reckon persons who have long lived without religion, are not brought to a sense of it, *they know not when or how*; are not enlightened in a sleep or dream, and of dead made alive, and yet they themselves can give no account of the matter. I mention this not only as proper to employ the devotion of serious persons, whose experiences may agree with what I have been saying; and for an admonition to such as know nothing of it, but to bear testimony, so far as it may go, to a doctrine, that I am afraid is growing out of request among us. I am sensible to talk thus of the grace of God in conversion, and to put people upon inquiring into the time and circumstances of their effectual calling, is not the strain in fashion. But as I believe these are points of great reality, and much importance to the Christian church, I desire never to be ashamed of them; and must own I should be glad to see them revived from the pulpit and press, especially in the hearts and experiences of Christians.

tations, and renewed fears : But in the main I found myself strengthened and settled ; and like the *Æthiopian* eunuch, went on my way rejoicing.

Lord, what shall I render for all thy benefits ! For this act of grace ; of great grace, sovereign, distinguishing grace ! I would never forget what thou hast done for my soul : Help me to take the cup of salvation and call on thy name. I have indeed reason to reflect on this as a day of small things with me ; to remember my great weaknesses : That *I spoke as a child, thought as a child, and acted as a child* in religion. Adored be the hand that supported and conducted me through all. I have reason to be much humbled that I was not more obedient to the heavenly vision ; was not more stedfast, *and abounding in the work of the Lord ; that I did not press forward more towards the mark ; following after, that I might apprehend that for which I was apprehended of Christ Jesus ;* that after I had escaped the pollutions of the world, *through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ;* I have been again so much entangled therein. Hereby my evidences have been obscured, jealousies and fears increased ; comforts and usefulness in the world obstructed. Notwithstanding I would hope the good work is begun, and has not wholly failed. I remember the beginning of it, when I felt in my soul the sharp arrows of conviction ; and was laid at the foot of Christ, with a broken, bleeding, penitent heart ; *and he said unto me live.* Surely I am not herein mistaken. *I rejoice, O Lord, in thy salvation ;* strengthen what thou hast wrought for me ; manifest and perfect thy own work.

Of GRACE.

1 COR. xv. 10. *And his Grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain.*

Fifth Specimen.

THE call of God, which the *apostle* was favoured with, had a great deal in it to manifest both the thing itself, and the author; but the most authentic and satisfactory evidence was from the effects and consequences of it: He could say, *the grace of God bestowed on him was not in vain*; he complied and co-operated with it; pursuing the duties of his new state. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; did not hide his talent in a napkin, but laboured, laboured abundantly, and shewed himself a good steward of the manifold grace of God. May I have the like evidence of the like blessed call; *shew my faith by my works*; prove the call of grace by a due improvement of that grace. Lord! teach and assist me herein; may not thy grace be in vain towards me. Could I look back upon the most awful scenes of conviction, even a voice from heaven, stopping me in a course of sin, and engaging me in some services of religion; yet if afterwards I apostatized, suffered myself to be entangled in former pollutions; returned with *the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*; grew secure and careless about my soul and eternity, and a libertine in my walk; I cannot see my supposed call could speak for me, or afford me comfort in such a case; or that any awakenings I might have experienced, ought to pass with me as a

proof of true conversion. And on the other hand, though I never felt those terrors of the Lord some have, yet if I find myself under the constant impressions of religion, and awe of God ; find that I love him, fear him, am careful to please and obey him in all things, I have no reason to question my religion, because I was not brought to it in the same way with some others.

God doth not tie himself up to one uniform method in dispensing his grace, and calling sinners : And we must not think the work is not done at all, because not done in the way we may be ready to mark out, *as God's way* ; as if he had but *one way*. “ I doubt (says a * grave * Life of God in the Soul of Man, p. 61. divine) it hath occasioned much unnecessary God in the Soul of Man, p. 61. disquietude to some holy persons, that they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their souls, as they have seen described in books ; that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (who perhaps have felt them in themselves) have too peremptorily prescribed unto others. God hath several ways of dealing with the souls of men, and it sufficeth if the work be accomplished, whatever the methods have been.” He works all things according to the counsel of his own will ; works always with wisdom, and in the manner that is best : He knows how to deal with every one, what discipline is most proper for him, and what will most effectually answer the design and purpose of his providence in the call of this or that person ; and a regard hereto directs to a different manner of working.

There is also no small difference in the circumstances divine grace finds persons in, even

in their natural state, which may make a difference in God's procedure with them. Though all are sinners, all are not alike sinners, alike tainted and defiled; some inherit more vicious inclinations than others, from their immediate parents; their bodily constitutions, derived to them by their birth, dispose them more strongly to several sins, than the constitution of others. Nor is it improbable that the mind may receive both advantages and disadvantages for religion, from the temper of mind predominant in parents; may I not add especially of the mother during the pregnancy? There may be some happy souls who inherit a great deal of *natural virtue*, as I may call it; (though I am far from excluding the grace of God from all influence therein): And these having the additional help of a pious education, and example from their childhood, are early seasoned with religion, and by the grace of God gradually confirmed in it.

Notwithstanding there are few, whatever the advantages of their constitution and education may be, but sufficiently show they need divine grace to renew and change them. There is that foolishness generally bound up in the hearts of children, and which early breaks forth in many woful instances, as requires more than the rod of human correction to drive it away. Much more, no question, might be done by parents towards the sanctification of their children, were they vigilant and faithful; but as things go in the world, we have but rare instances of such as escape the common taint, and may be called *righteous persons that need no repentance*. And indeed how careful soever parents may be, and seemingly successful for a time, young persons,

as they grow up, are too often carried away with the examples of the world, and hurried on by sense and appetite to many follies, so that the first good impressions wear off.

As to the manner in which God proceeds with these persons, or with others, it is far from being fixed and invariable : And it becomes us not to limit his grace herein, or prescribe to his wisdom. It is the work of grace I would inquire after, rather than the mode of operation. I am much more concerned to know whether I am called than how or when : And indeed this is a matter of such high importance, that I would not be easy without distinct and clear evidence of it. It is, I grant, a mistake to conclude none have grace, that have not experienced such or such a process of spiritual convictions ; but it is a more dangerous mistake in religion, to leave out the special regenerating work of the Holy Spirit ; as if a religious course might commence without his renewing influence on the heart, and a principle of divine life as the foundation thereof. Certainly nothing but the grace of God, however or whenever dispensed, is sufficient to begin the Christian's motion towards heaven. I cannot understand, I must own, the account a learned man gives of this matter in a practical book ; “ That there is “ (says * he) a certain period of time, at which * Dr.

“ every man that is truly religious, began to be *Clark's*
 “ so ; and from which the beginning of his reli- *Essays on*
 “ gious life may truly be dated, is evident.” *Baptism,*
&c. p. 40.

What this period is, he afterwards intimates : “ In
 “ those (says he) who have been educated from
 “ their infancy in the Christian religion, the
 “ period from whence their religious life ought
 “ to be dated is *confirmation* ; the time from

P. 34.

“ their baptism being only their preparation, or
 “ time of instruction.” He adds, indeed, “ that
 “ for those who have neglected this great and
 “ solemn opportunity, or have since fallen into
 “ any great and wilful sins, the only remaining
 “ time from whence their religious life can be
 “ reckoned is *repentance*, that is, the time since
 “ which they have so perfectly had the conquest
 “ over their temptations, as not to have been
 “ seduced by them any more into any gross or
 “ wilful sin ;” but the more ordinary and more
 stated period he makes *confirmation*, or *baptism*.
 “ One privilege,” saith he, “ represented and
 “ conferred by baptism, was the influence and
 “ assistance of God’s Holy Spirit ; adding, all
 “ persons that were baptized, as their bodies
 “ were washed and purified with water, so their
 “ minds were sanctified by the Spirit of God :
 “ *But ye are washed ; but ye are sanctified ; but*
 “ *ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus,*
 “ *and by the Spirit of our God,* 1 Cor. vi. 11. At
 “ their baptism they received the Holy Ghost
 “ as a gift constantly annexed to that holy or-
 “ dinance ; and unless they quenched and
 “ grieved it by their sins, committed afterwards,
 “ it always continued with them from thence-
 “ forward, assisting and enabling them to per-
 “ form their duty ; strengthening and comfort-
 “ ing them under temptations and afflictions,
 “ and *bearing witness with their Spirit that they*
 “ *were the children of God,* Rom. viii. 16.” I
 doubt this will not hold true of all the Christian
 “ proselytes, that received baptism, even in the
 “ first, and extraordinary age of grace ; parti-
 cularly not of *Simon Magus*, who, we are told,
 believed and was baptized, and yet continued in
 the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, Acts

P. 11.

viii. 13. 23. The same author in his preface, mentions it “ as a reason why some men have “ attributed the whole of man’s conversion to “ such an extraordinary and *uncertain* grace of “ God, as has given men occasion to sit still in “ their sins, in expectation of the time, when “ this extraordinary grace should be poured “ down upon them, because (says he) they have “ fixed that assistance of God’s grace to an *uncertain* period, which God himself has constantly annexed to his ordinances, and which “ he certainly bestows on men at their baptism, “ or upon their solemn taking upon themselves “ the profession of religion (*viz.*) in *confirmation*.”

Surely this is not spoken with that caution and judgment as might have been expected. I know not what proof can be made, that God has certainly annexed his grace to the ordinance of *baptism*, or *confirmation*; and that the great and divine work the scripture speaks so much of, under the notion of repentance, regeneration, being transformed by the renewing of our minds, &c. is at that time *constantly* performed. I am afraid, if confirmation find persons destitute of grace, it often leaves them so; even though it was administered with all the solemnity the Doctor wishes for; and I cannot but suspect the directing persons to this, as the *period* from whence a new and divine life begins, tends to deceive them, tempting them to take up with a formality, or at best a sign of divine grace instead of the thing itself. In the mean time, I cheerfully agree with what is here asserted, *that there is a certain period from whence a religious life takes its date*, though I cannot agree that it is the time of baptism, confirmation, nor indeed

admission to the Lord's table, but more at *large the time of conversion*, when it pleases God to call us by his grace.

It is granted this work is accomplished in a very different manner; sometimes *instantaneously* and suddenly, and with such remarkable circumstances, that it becomes a known and certain thing to those concerned in it, and it may be, in some measure, to others; as in the instances of the apostle *Paul*, the jailor, and of *Lydia*, Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things spoken of Paul.* While she was hearing, the Spirit of God touched her conscience; the effect of which was her immediate embracing the doctrine of the gospel proposed to her. But often the work is brought about in a way more secret and less perceptible: Nor is the Christian so much concerned to examine into the method of divine grace in his call and change, as into the thing itself. The main points I would contend for are, that it is a divine work, the finger of God, owing to the special operation of his Spirit, and that this, and this alone, is the beginning of a divine life. I reckon this well expressed by the author referred to before. "Religion in the souls of men," says he, "is the immediate work of God, and all our natural endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit those supernatural aids, by which it must be wrought. The Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Highest must overshadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Christ be formed in us." It follows in the same book, p. 104. "That there is a new birth, and an inward divine operation of the Holy Spirit of God, which doth constantly exert itself in the

Life of
God in
the Soul
of Man,
p. 58.

“souls of the adopted sons of God, but chiefly
“in their regeneration, is a truth so sacred and
“certain, that none who have any acquaintance
“with the inward ways of God can so much as
“question it. This is most irreligiously re-
“strained to the extraordinary effusion of the
“Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*, or to the
“other miraculous gifts of the Spirit, in those
“beginnings of Christianity; contrary both to
“the promises of the *Old Testament*, and the
“whole current of the *New*.” And having
taken notice of ineffectual convictions in some
men, he subjoins, “But when the Spirit of God
“is poured out upon them, then there are pre-
“sented to their understandings more lively,
“strong, constant, and invigorated impressions,
“which do not only gain belief, but obtrude
“themselves so often, and with that energy
“upon the mind of the converted man, that he
“is divinely overcome, and yet without the
“least force on his reason and will; he seeing
“the greatest reason in the world for what is
“proposed, and chusing with the freest liber-
“ty; so that the renewed man becomes in all
“things another manner of person than he was
“formerly.”

In short, it is God that works in us that
which is well pleasing in his sight: He opens
every heart as well as that of *Lydia's*, that is
duly attentive to the great things of religion;
he begins a good work in us; and it is from his
working that our course of religion begins. This
is the period and date of the divine life, from
hence the Christian sets out in his race: And
though we are not to sit still, but expect his
grace in the use of all appointed means, and
faithful endeavours, according to the powers and

capacities God has given us ; yet we must wait for his grace as that which crowns our endeavours, and makes them effectual : *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. There is an harmony between God's grace and our endeavours ; the one doth not render the other unnecessary ; but both must concur to make the Christian, and indeed in all the achievements and performances of the Christian life.

Inquire, O my soul ! into this important matter ; upon what principles dost thou act in religion ? upon what foundation dost thou stand ? Thou art baptized ; mayest have received confirmation, as it is among the ministeries of men ; mayest have professed thy faith in Christ, and obedience to him ; sealed his covenant at his table ; all this thou mayest do, and yet the main thing, the source and supply of all vital religion be wanting (*viz.*) *the illumination and unction of the Holy Spirit*, the call of grace : Blessed be God for any evidence I have of this ; that I have any reason to hope grace has been bestowed upon me, and that his grace has not been altogether in vain ; has not been a dead inactive principle, but a spring of divine motion, of spiritual affections and operations. Alas ! that it has been no more so ; that I have so much neglected the gift of God in me ; hid and buried the noblest talent ; quenched and grieved the Holy Ghost. Have mercy on me, O my God, according to thy loving kindness ; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions, forgive my defects, heal my backslidings, strengthen the things that remain, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

Of GRACE.

1 COR. xv. 10. *And his Grace bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly.*

DID conversion import no more than a prose-^{Sixth}lytism to the Christian faith, as many seem to ^{Specimen.} think; did regeneration and the new creature include no more, than what is done for us in baptism; as the learned Dr. intimated to his auditory, when in a discourse on that subject he pointed to the font and told them, *There they were all regenerated*; was this so I should have no occasion to inquire into the matter: But certainly there is a conversion from sin, from the love of the world; from a carnal, sensual course, as well as from Paganism, Judaism, &c. and the one is as necessary for many Christians, as the other for downright infidels: *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God*, Rom. ii. 28, 29. Nor is he a Christian that is baptized, has learned his creed; who has a form of knowledge, and of truth in the law; but he is a Christian, and he only, who has the principles and heart of a Christian. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*, 1 Cor. v. 17. *And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. Examine, therefore, O my soul! into the grounds of thy profession and hope, and do not flatter thyself with a weak opinion that

thou art a Christian, because thou art called so, and wearest the common Christian badge. The apostle had a clearness in this matter above what most can pretend to : The transactions of grace towards him ; the influence of God's spirit upon his mind in the beginning and progress of a divine work, was so distinct, clear, and self-evident, that he could speak of it and relate it without any hesitation : He knew God had called him by his grace ; well knew *when* and *how* : But after all the fullest conviction, the most satisfying proof of the truth of his call, was the happy effects of it ; that the grace of God was not in vain towards him : It was shewn him at his first conversion, how *great things* he was to *suffer* for the name of *Christ*, *Acts ix. 16.* what difficulties he must expect to meet with in the discharge of his office ; what hatred, reproach, and perils of every sort ; but none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear, so he might finish his course with joy, *Acts xx. 24.* In short, the vigour of his love and zeal were, in some measure, answerable to the riches of divine grace towards him : Never was man more distinguished by the grace of God, and, it may be, never did any more honour and improve it : *His grace bestowed on me was not in vain.*

Lord may I have the like authentic evidence of my call ! May I be able this way to make good my pretensions to thy grace ; it is comfortable when persons can look back upon clear distinct circumstances of a divine work, and recite the history of grace in their conversion. With how much levity and despite soever some may treat such a subject, it is of account with many wiser persons, and affords them glorious entertain-

ment. However, I would not lay the main stress here, and make this the *only*, or indeed the *chief* evidence of my Christianity. The work of God upon the souls of men is mysterious and intricate; it is common to mistake it: Some take conviction for conversion, occasional heats in religion, short flights of devotion, or a fit of melancholy, in which something of religion intermixes, for a work of grace; and being persuaded that such a work was begun in their souls, and thence drawing inferences, that *once in Christ, always in Christ*, &c. they argue themselves into a confidence concerning their good state; though they have *never brought forth fruits meet for repentance*: And this supposed imaginary work they often refer to afterwards, and rest in, as the foundation of their hope and comfort, whatever reason they have to question it; though all their goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that soon passeth away. O may I not fall under such delusions! The grace of God is not a transient work, but a permanent principle; *the tree is known by its fruits*: A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, neither will it be barren and altogether without fruit. I have no sufficient evidence to conclude I have received the grace of God, unless I can say *it has not been in vain*. Search, O my soul! into this matter: Has the grace of God, thou art pleasing thyself with the thoughts of, performed its part in thee, accomplished what it is designed and given for, set up a throne in thy heart, and shewn itself in a steady course of solid religion and piety? That I may be the better able to make a judgment of my state, I shall here take a short view of a true convert; one who has been created in Christ

Jesus to good works ; one who *has not received the grace of God in vain* ; but who has lived and acted under the conduct, impression and influence thereof ; in which I shall give a sort of an history of grace ; the effects of it in the life of a Christian, from the beginning to the end of his course.

1. The first effort of grace in the soul, is ordinarily towards God, and in a way of devotion ; no sooner are the eyes opened, but they are darted towards heaven : The Christian's first solicitude is about himself ; an escape out of the danger he sees himself in ; a deliverance from the wrath of God and a future hell, the obtaining forgiveness of his sins, &c. These are the great things that fill his mind at this time, especially if he has passed through a state of bondage and terror ; accordingly prayer he finds his most proper relief. It is remarked of the apostle immediately upon his conversion, *that he prayed*, Acts ix. 11. Which seems mentioned as an evidence, and indeed a first essay of grace ; generally religion begins here. The new creature breathes in prayer, the subject and matter of which is various, and managed with different skill, enlargement and success, according to the different states and circumstances of persons ; I may add, and different degrees of the divine unction. For the most part there is a great deal of penitent confession, self-abasement and abhorrence, indignation, fear and vehement desire, and sometimes *strong crying and tears* : And as the Christian sets out in this manner, he remains a constant supplicant, waiting before the throne of grace through the whole of his life : Nor does he confine himself to this single duty, but is busy in

other parts of worship : Thus it is said of those early converts, *Acts ii. 42.* *That they continued in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers :* When the grace of God brings any into the church, they are thenceforth employed in the service thereof.

2. The most genuine and constant effect, is ^{Life of} the divine nature communicated; the image ^{God in} of God drawn in the soul; consisting in the ^{the soul} several graces that adorn the Christian's heart ^{of Man,} and conversation. These make up the divine ^{p. 15.} life, "the root of which," says an excellent person, "is faith; the chief branches are love
 "to God, charity to men, purity and humility.
 "Faith has the same place in the divine life,
 "which sense hath in the natural; being in-
 "deed nothing else but a kind of sense, and
 "feeling persuasion of spiritual things: It ex-
 "tends itself unto all divine truths; but in our
 "lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to
 "the declaration of God's mercy and recon-
 "cileableness to sinners through a Mediator;
 "and therefore receiving its denomination from
 "that principal object, is ordinarily termed
 "*Faith in Jesus Christ.* The love of God is a
 "delightful and affectionate sense of the divine
 "perfections, which makes the soul resign, and
 "sacrifice itself wholly unto him; desiring
 "above all things to please him; and delight-
 "ing in nothing so much as in fellowship and
 "communion with him; and being ready to
 "do and suffer any thing for his sake, or at his
 "pleasure: Though this affection may have its
 "first rise from the favours and mercies of
 "God towards ourselves, yet doth it, in its
 "growth and progress, transcend such parti-
 "cular considerations, and ground itself on his

“ infinite goodness, manifested in all the works
“ of creation, and providence. A soul thus
“ possessed with divine love, must needs be
“ enlarged towards all mankind, in a sincere
“ and unbounded affection; because of the
“ relation they have to God, being his crea-
“ tures, and having something of his image
“ stampt upon them. And this is that charity
“ I named as the second branch of religion, and
“ under which all the parts of justice, and all
“ the duties we owe to our neighbour are
“ eminently comprehended: For he who doth
“ truly love all the world, will be nearly con-
“ cerned in the interest of every one, and so
“ far from wronging, or injuring any person,
“ that he will resent any evil befalls others, as
“ if that it happened to himself.

“ By purity I understand a due abstracted-
“ ness from the body, and mastery over the in-
“ ferior appetites; or such a temper and dispo-
“ sition of mind, as makes a man despise and
“ abstain from all pleasures and delights of
“ sense or fancy, which are sinful in them-
“ selves, or tend to extinguish or lessen our
“ relish of more divine and intellectual plea-
“ sures; which doth also infer a resoluteness
“ to undergo all those hardships he may meet
“ with in the performance of his duty; so that
“ not only chastity and temperance, but also
“ Christian courage and magnanimity, may
“ come under this head. Humility imports a
“ deep sense of our own meanness, with a
“ hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of
“ our owing all that we are to the divine
“ bounty; which is always accompanied by a
“ profound submission to the will of God, and
“ great deadness towards the glory of the world,

“ and applause of men. These are the highest
“ perfections that either men or angels are
“ capable of; the very foundation of heaven
“ laid in the soul; and he who hath attained
“ them, needs not desire to pry into the hidden
“ rolls of God’s decrees, or search the volumes
“ of heaven to know what is determined about
“ his everlasting condition; but he may find a
“ copy of God’s thoughts concerning him writ-
“ ten in his own breast: His love to God may
“ give him assurance of God’s favour to him;
“ and those beginnings of happiness which he
“ feels in the conformity of the powers of his
“ soul to the nature of God, and compliance
“ with his will, are a sure pledge that his feli-
“ city shall be perfected and continued to all
“ eternity: and it is not without reason that
“ one said, *I had rather see the real impressions*
“ *of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than*
“ *have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to*
“ *tell me, that my name were enrolled in the book*
“ *of life.*”

These graces, which might be more largely explained, and to which many other particulars might be added, are the most infallible evidence of a divine work, and indeed the genuine issues of it. It is as fit to call that a man, which has no soul, no rational faculties, as him a Christian that is destitute of the grace of the Spirit; not that the convert *immediately* and on a sudden, finds them all in himself, and all in their strength, lustre and vigour. They are the product ordinarily of much time and experience; the new creature, or creature of grace is first an embryo, as I may say, as well as the natural creature, and all the members of it in *continuance* are fashioned, when as yet there were

none of them. That glorious piece, the divine image, is not brought to perfection all at once, but receives many additional touches and gradual refinement; the Christian sitting time after time under the hand of the divine Spirit; nor is the finishing stroke given till we leave the body. I bless thee, O my God! for what I have experienced of this great and glorious work, and the happy fruits thereof; for what thou hast performed in me, and for me; for the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; for the more imperfect draught of thy image. Lord! carry on what thou hast begun, fulfil the work of faith in me, of love and of every other grace with power.

3dly. The grace of God is a sovereign preservative against sin; arms and strengthens the soul against it, and gives a conquest over it; *whosoever is born of God, says the apostle, does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 John iii. 9.* And again, Chap. v. 18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* And to the same purpose, Gal. v. 24. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* It is not said they shall, but they have crucified them, have done it already in some measure. The seed of God, the first original principle is planted in the soul to defend it against the defilements of sin; and indeed all the graces, as branches from that root, are so many guards of the heart; as *Fear, Nehe. v. 15. Love, John v. 3. Hope, 1 John iii. 3. &c.* Lord may I find the power and efficacy of thy grace herein; find it a prevailing principle of mortifi-

cation ; of victory over the world, and the lusts thereof ; disposing and enabling me to cleanse myself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit. Surely if I be born of God and resemble him, as I shall love what he loveth, so I shall hate the abominable thing his soul hateth.

4thly. Divine grace manifests itself in a constant vigorous opposition to the remainders of sin. The best of Christians, in this life, have *sin dwelling in them* ; are compassed about with infirmities and frailties, which grace struggles with and gradually subdues. Every nature has its antipathies, and will bend its force against such things as are destructive and hurtful to it. Thus it is with the new nature ; and as there is nothing more contrary to it, more destructive of its interests and comforts than sin, it cannot but oppose it ; and hence there is an inward warfare and contest in the soul of a renewed man ; *the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*. This, I think, the apostle represents *Rom. 7*. Nor can I apprehend any injury done to him, or religion, by such an interpretation : Those that object and insist that the apostle is not here speaking of himself, but in the person of a carnal *Jew*, under the ineffectual teaching and restraint of the law, and reproof of his own conscience, do not, it may be, enough consider, that it is not any sort of gross sins the apostle is complaining of the prevalency of ; nor of a willing allowed subjection to *any sin* ; but of such infirmities, as were against the purpose, resolution and bent of his mind ; and if any expressions be thought too strong, we may understand them as the language of humility ; instances of which we have elsewhere : As when he calls himself *the chief*

of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. *Less than the least of all the saints*, Eph. iii. 8. He was far from *-serving the law of sin*, by a deliberate free consent thereto; or being *sold under sin*, as that notes his yielding himself a willing captive. Sin was dethroned in his soul; was no longer *king and Lord* there, though it sometimes played the *tyrant*: His heart, his will, which is the man, was against it; and therefore he could say, *it is not I but sin that dwelleth in me*, ver. 17. He aimed at a more absolute purity than he could attain to, and so often falling short, he bewailed his case, and expresses himself with this resentment; in which I can see nothing inconsistent with what he says in the foregoing chapter, or in any other part of the *New Testament*. Christians of greater refinement and better taste in religion, will censure themselves with much severity, for such infirmities as escape the observation of others. The want of a frame for the solemnities of God's house, worship and day; neglecting or mismanaging a duty; the sallies of pride, vanity, envy, &c. will occasion deeper humblings, greater self-reproach and abhorrence, than others find upon the commission of very gross sins; and no wonder that persons of this make and temper complain of a law in their members; of captivity, slavery, bondage, and are ready to cry out, *O wretched men who shall deliver us!* An irregular motion in the mind, disorderly affections, desires, passions, &c. Want of love to God, delight in him, cheerfulness, life and vigour in his service, are with them *great sins*; and as they are such infirmities as these I suppose the apostle here refers to, and not drunkenness, adultery, sodomy, murder, and the like infamies; I

cannot see why he may not speak of himself in the strain he does; not thereby representing himself, or any other good man as living in fleshly lusts, but as groaning under a sense of present imperfections, and waiting for a deliverance: But after all, I do not think it worth while to contend for this construction; the thing itself is certain, whether it be found in this place of scripture or not; there is an inward struggle, in good men, of grace against corruption; and I reckon it a mark of grace, and an evidence that it is not in vain towards us, when we have a due sense and resentment of remaining infirmities, and are in the proper use of means striving for mastery.

5thly. Divine grace in the soul is a principle of universal obedience, and zealous service in religion: As the gospel, the declaration and instrument of grace, teaches *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 12. Much more does grace itself, as an inward vital principle, do so. The apostle whilst under the impression, and it may be preparatory discipline of grace, cries out *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do*, Acts ix. 6. His mind was brought into a state of subjection, and his whole after conduct shewed his loyalty to his great Master: *For me to live*, says he, *is Christ*, Phil. i. 21. No pains, self-denial, and diligence he thought too much to promote the honour of God, and serve the interest of his church: *We being affectionately desirous of you*, says he to the Thessalonians, *were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us*, 1 Thess. ii. 8. *He laboured more abundantly*; and with what a noble generous zeal did he go through his la-

hours, and bear even the disappointment of them? *I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved, 2 Cor. xii. 15.* The grace of God has the like effect in all the faithful. Indeed at first the zeal of young converts is generally more confined to their own concerns, spiritual concerns; but as they grow in grace their zeal is more extended, and employed about those duties that respect the rights, interests, and services of mankind, and especially the church of God. *We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren, 1 John iii. 14.* Peter was directed to shew his love to Christ, by his care of the church, *John xxi. 15.* And the more abundant labour the apostle speaks of, as an argument *that the grace of God bestowed on him was not in vain*, was chiefly in the service of the church. Lord, may I have this evidence of thy grace! may it be a source of catholic obedience, and catholic love! May *I have respect unto all thy commands, and then shall I not be ashamed, Psal. cxix. 6.* Turning unto thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my might, according to all thy law, *2 Kings xxiii. 25.* Walking in all thy ordinances, and in the whole compass of my duty blameless. Help me to converse not only with thyself, but with my fellow-creatures, according to the rules of thy word; loving God with all my heart, soul, and mind, and my neighbour as myself; doing good to all men, as I have opportunity, especially unto them who are of the household of faith; praying for the peace of Jerusalem, preferring it to my chiefest joy, and seeking its good always.

6thly. It is among the effects of the grace of God, that it so moulds, transforms, and frames

the heart for religion, that the work of it becomes *natural, free, and easy*. The Christian, at first, finds more difficulty in his way; more reluctance and backwardness to his duty; but as grace prevails, this is by degrees overcome. His heart is enlarged, and he runs the ways of God's commandments with alacrity and cheerfulness. "Religion (says one, *Dighton*) is an inward, free, self-moving principle; and those who have made progress in it are not acted only by external motives, driven merely by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompting him to it. Nor does he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute, only to appease the divine justice, or quiet his clamorous conscience; but these religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul: He prays, and gives thanks, and repents, not only because these things are commanded, but rather because he is sensible of his wants, and of the divine goodness, and of the folly and misery of a sinful life: His charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him; his love makes him willing to give; and though there were no outward obligation, *his heart would devise liberal things*. Injustice, or intemperance, and all other vices are as contrary to his temper and constitution, as the basest actions are to the most generous spirit, and impudence and scurrility to those who are naturally modest. In a word,

Life of
God in the
Soul of
Man,
p. 58.

“ what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is in
 “ some measure applicable to his followers, *that*
 “ *it is their meat and drink to do their Father’s*
 “ *will*, John iv. 34. Those exercises of religion,
 “ which to others are insipid and tedious, do
 “ yield the highest pleasure, and delight to
 “ them : They rejoice when they are called to
 “ go up to the house of the Lord ; that they
 “ may see his *power* and his *glory as they have*
 “ *formerly seen it in his sanctuary*, Psal. lxxiii. 2.
 P. 41. “ They never think themselves so happy, as
 “ when having retired from the world, and hav-
 “ ing got free from the noise and hurry of af-
 “ fairs, and silenced all their clamorous passions
 “ (those troublesome guests within), they place
 “ themselves in the presence of God, and enter-
 “ tain fellowship and communion with him.
 “ They delight to adore his perfections, and
 “ recount his favours, and to protest their affec-
 “ tion to him, and tell him a thousand times
 “ that they love him ; to lay out their troubles
 “ and wants before him, and disburthen their
 “ hearts in his bosom.” Religion is not only
 their work, but their element in some measure ;
 not but they may sometimes have their dark
 hours and dull frames, but ordinarily religion is
 agreeable to them ; a *day in God’s court is better*
than a thousand : they have many hours of com-
 fort and joy upon their knees, and of triumph
 at the Lord’s table. Lord, may I experience
 more of the power of thy grace in this instance ;
 I shall then be assured it is not in vain. May I
 be thus transformed, more and more transform-
 ed, by the renewing of my mind ; may religion
 become my delight, my very life and nature ;
 my constant entertainment and joy.

7thly. The grace of God, when it is not in
 vain, but has free scope in the soul, carries it

forward through all the stages of the divine life, refining, purifying, and advancing it still higher and higher therein. *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* As the rising sun increases till it comes to its meridian strength and brightness, so it should be with the Christian, and would be, did he not check and restrain the divine principle, and quench the divine Spirit. O! may I hold on my way, wax stronger and stronger; and like him that *sat on the white horse, go forth conquering, and to conquer,* Rev. vi. 2.

8thly. It is of an humbling nature; notwithstanding all its great achievements, its victories and triumphs, it lays the soul low, and keeps it in a state of abasement, and often of self-annihilation. The *apostle* laboured more abundantly than they all, and was every way a person of distinguished excellency; and yet, how doth he shrink and contract himself! *I am nothing,* 2 Cor. xii. 11. *less than the least of all saints,* Eph. iii. 8. *forgetting the things which are behind, he pressed towards the mark,* Phil. iii. 13, 14. Past attainments he made little account of, and was ready to overlook them as nothing.

Nilq; putans actum dum quid superesset agendum. And hence, I suppose, that humbling strain, Rom. vii. which so many think cannot be understood of the *apostle* himself. It would not, I believe, have been his language, when a *Pharisee*, and when touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless; but that grace, which had so gloriously distinguished and enriched him, had emptied him also: The best Christians are often least in their own eyes. *I am carnal,* says he, though he had a most devout heart; a most divine, heavenly, and spiritual frame. Lord! whilst I contemplate thy

grace, and praise thee for the ornaments thou hast put upon me ; may I have a constant sense of my own imperfections, and be vile, and nothing in my own eyes.

9thly. I cannot but reckon it among the properties of divine grace, when duly cherished and improved, and not in vain, that it raises the mind above this world, and fixes the eye upon another, *2 Cor. iv. ult.* Grace is of an aspiring nature, and moves with a constant tendency towards heaven ; and as it has this world in its way, it triumphs over it : It not only maintains a warfare against it, in all the forms in which it appears, tempting, deluding, in grieving and ensnaring, but overcomes it, strips it of its charms, and throws it under foot. The Christian, under the power, influence, and prevalency of the grace of God, is in some measure *crucified to the world, and the world to him*, *Gal. vi. 14.* His heart is in heaven ; his affections withdrawn from this earth, so that he often looks down upon it with a pious shyness ; and passes through its various scenes of vanity and trial with a great deal of indifferency ; *weeping, as though he wept not ; and rejoicing, as though he rejoiced not*, *1 Cor. vii. 30.* This was the apostle's happy temper and frame : he could say, *none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so I may finish my course with joy*, *Acts xx. 24.* The affairs of religion, and of another world, appeared so great and important ; did so possess his mind and fill his faculties, that this world was almost quite out of sight with him : He would scarce vouchsafe a glance towards it ! And I cannot but observe with what an emphasis of affection he speaks of the day of retribution, often calling it, *that day*, *2 Tim. iv. 8.* *2 Tim. i. 12. 18.* The day is not described, nor

mentioned before ; the antecedent was in his own mind ; *that day*, viz. *that great and glorious day his heart and thoughts run so much upon* : 'The day of his hopes and happiness ; which he had a constant reference to, for support and comfort in his tribulations, and excitement in his duties and labours ; and in comparison of which every other day, and the occurrences thereof were but dreams and vanity. Alas ! that I know no more of the power and efficacy of divine grace herein ; that my affections are no more carried out after the things of a future world, and my mind no more filled with the prospect of *that day*, and the glories of it ? that I cannot attain to a greater indifferency about every state of present things, but have given way to little transports, ruffle or discomposure, upon so slight an occasion as a change, any change, in that fashion or scheme of things that lies on this side eternity, and is continually passing away ; that I have been so much diverted and stopped in my pursuits and course by the carcasses of earthly enjoyments, 2 Sam. ii. 23. I desire to bless God, that the concerns of heaven and another world have, as I hope, the chief sway with me : May they have my whole heart, and be all in all to me !

A PRAYER and COMPLAINT.

LORD, thou art the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace ; the Author of every good and perfect gift. I have nothing but what I have received from thy bounty : All my light, life, and comfort is from the fountain of thy grace. When I look back upon the methods of that grace towards me, in calling, renewing, sanctifying, supporting me hitherto ; when I remember what a mass of darkness, stupidity, folly, and enmity I was, and how much thou hast

distinguished and enriched me ; I am convinced I owe thee more than words can pay ; more than time, than eternity can pay. But, O ! how am I here confined, and at a loss ! my sentiments and affections are low, my expression and language lower. Accept, Lord ! a willing mind. When my harp is strung, and my tongue touched with a coal from thy altar ; when I have learnt the notes that suit the great subject, *then* I shall praise thee. And, O my soul ! look back on thy past conduct. *The grace of the Lord Jesus* has been *exceeding abundant* ; but thy love, gratitude, and obedience, have not equally abounded. I have been far from walking worthy of the Lord, to all pleasing, and shewing forth the praises of him, who has called me out of darkness into his marvellous light. I have not rendered unto the Lord according to the benefits done me ; have not attended to my call, and improved his grace ; have been foolish, disobedient, bent to backsliding : Have mercy upon me, O my God ! do not abandon and forsake me. I have sinned against thee, wronged my own soul, obstructed thy grace and my own comforts ; forgive what is past ; strengthen what remains ; perform the good work in me to the day of Christ Jesus ; and when the top-stone of this glorious building is brought forth, I shall for ever cry, *Grace, grace to it.*

END OF VOL. I.

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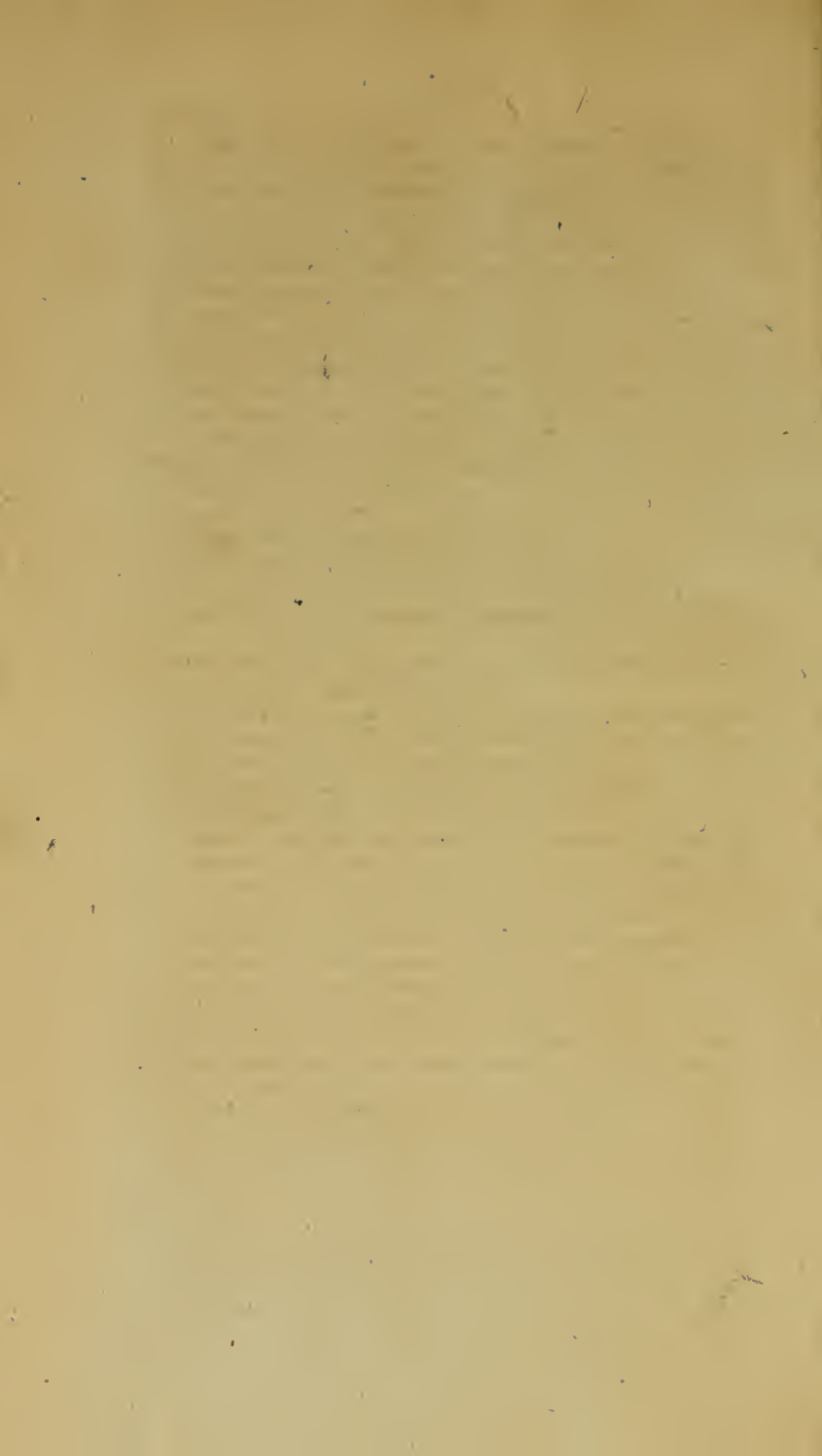
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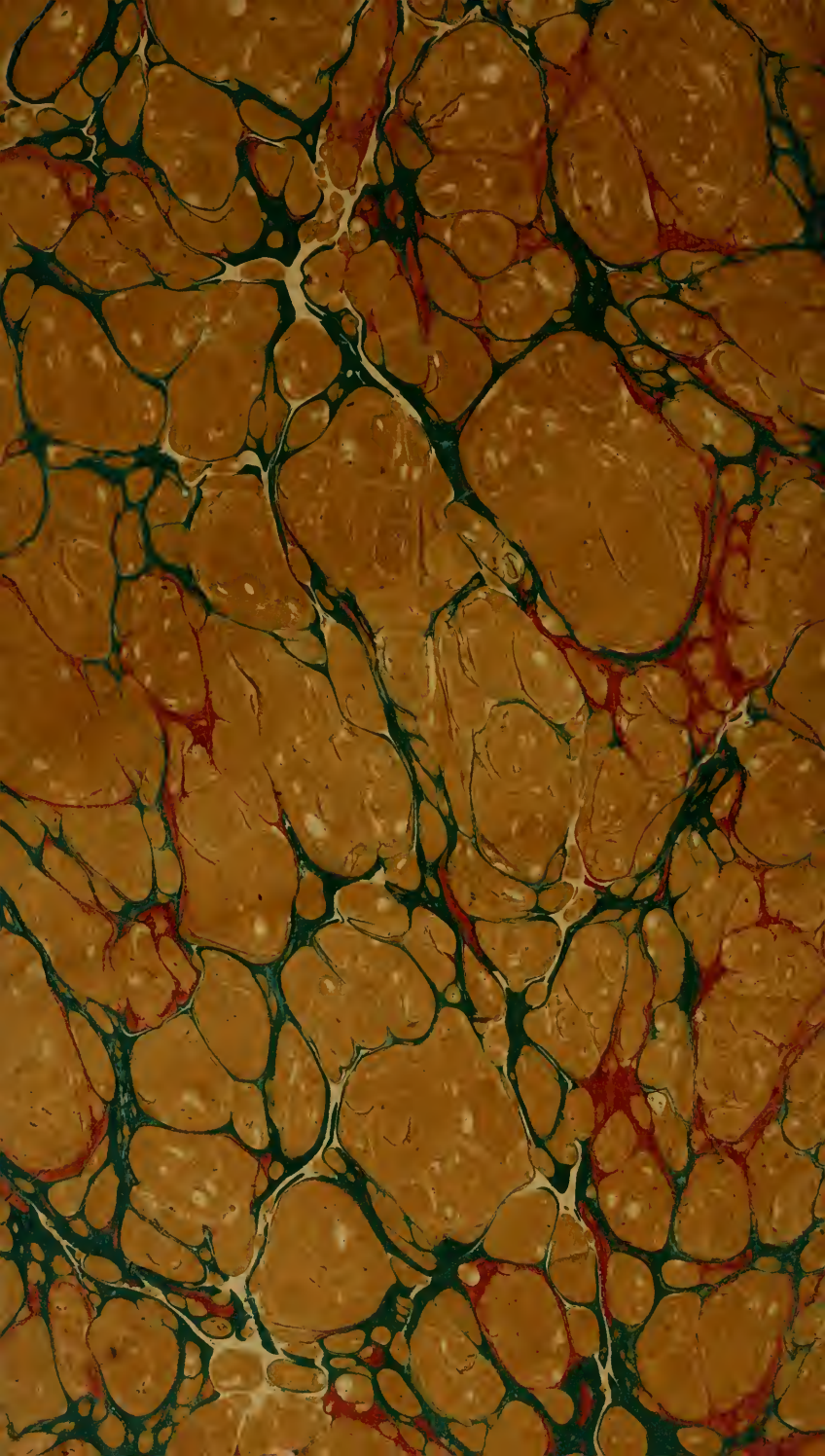
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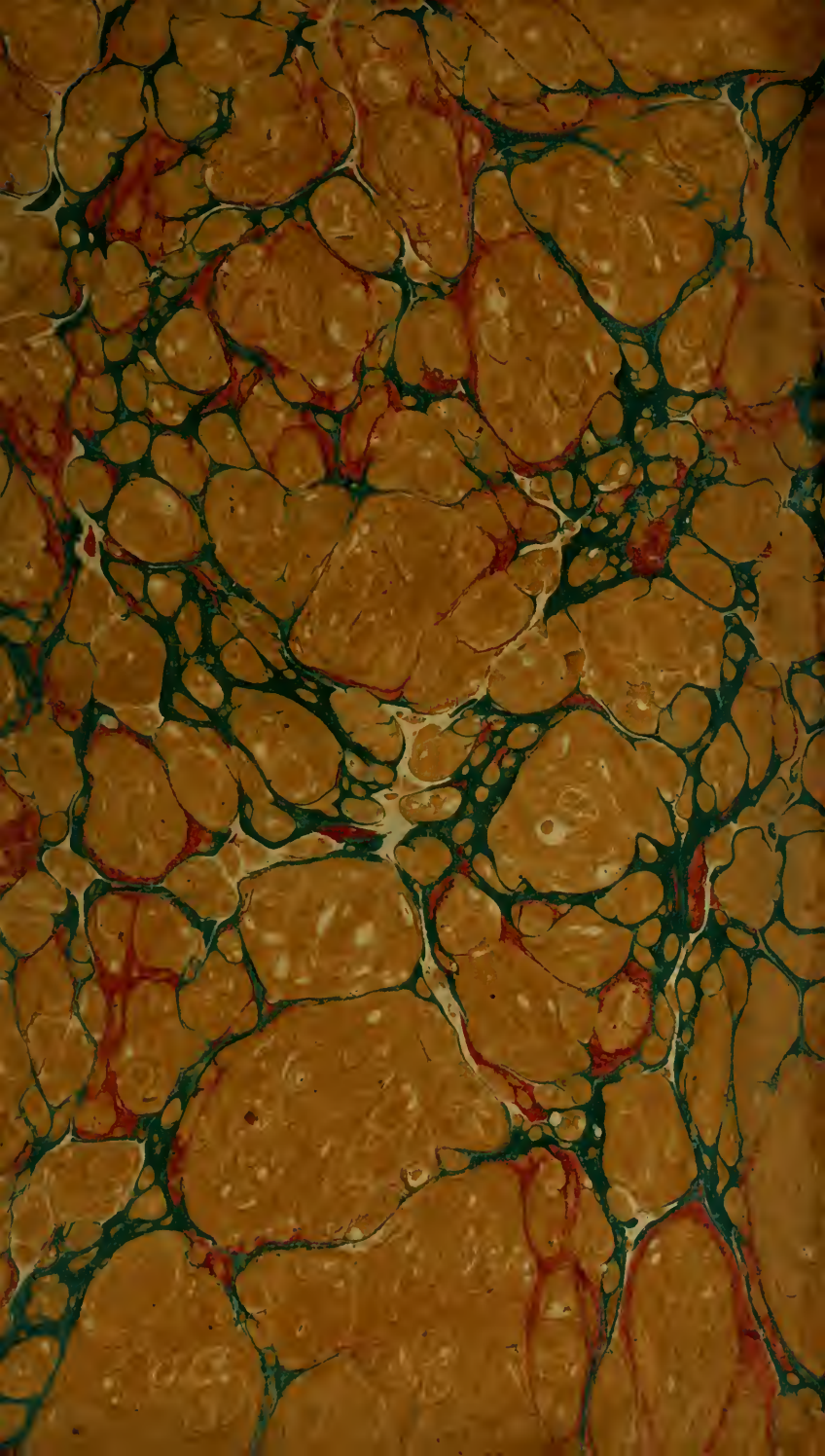
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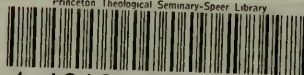








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